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NOTES

ON

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

By C. H. M.

"*Things new and old.*"

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PREFATORY NOTE

TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

AS several persons in America have, without any authority whatever from me, undertaken to publish my four* volumes of "Notes," I deem it my duty to inform the reader that I have given full permission to Messrs. LOIZEAUX BROTHERS to publish an edition of those books in such form as they shall consider most suitable.

C. H. MACKINTOSH.

6 West Park Terrace, Scarborough,
May 1st, 1879

* Now six.

PREFATORY NOTE

TO THE FOURTH EDITION

I CANNOT suffer this fourth edition to go forth without an expression of heart-felt thankfulness to the Lord for His goodness in making use of such a feeble instrumentality for the profit of souls and the spread of His own simple truth.

It is an unspeakable privilege to be permitted, in any small degree, to minister to the souls of those who are so precious to Christ. "Lovest thou Me? . . . Feed My sheep." Such were the touching words of the departing Shepherd; and, assuredly, when they fall powerfully upon the heart, they must rouse all the energies of one's moral being to carry out, in every possible way, the gracious desire breathed therein. To gather and to feed the lambs and sheep of the flock of Christ, are the most exalted services in which any one can be engaged. Not a single honest effort, put forth for the achievement of such noble ends, will be forgotten in that day "when the Chief Shepherd shall appear."

May God the Holy Ghost fill the heart, anoint the lips, and consecrate the pen of every servant of Christ, so that streams of pure and living truth may flow, in every direction, for the refreshment of all those who are on their way to glory.

C. H. M.

PREFACE

To all who love and relish the simple gospel of the grace of God, I would earnestly recommend the following "Notes on the Book of Genesis." They are characterized by a deep-toned evangelical spirit. Having had the privilege of reading them in MS., I can speak as one who has found profit therefrom. Man's complete ruin in sin, and God's perfect remedy in Christ, are fully, clearly, and often strikingly presented, especially in the earlier chapters.

To Christ's servants in the gospel, sound, forcible statements as to what *sin* is, and what *grace* is, are deeply valuable in the present time, when so much that is merely superficial is abroad.

The gospel of Christ, as perfectly meeting man's nature, condition and character, is comparatively little known, and less proclaimed. Hence, the numerous doubts, fears, and unsettled questions, which fill the hearts and perplex the consciences of many of God's dear children. Until the soul is led to see that the entire question of sin, and the claims of divine holiness, were *all and forever settled* on the cross, sweet, quiet rest of conscience will be but little known.

Nothing can meet the urgent cry of a troubled conscience but the one perfect sacrifice of Christ, offered *to* God, *for us*, on the cross,—"For even Christ, *our* passover, is sacrificed *for us*." There, and there alone, it will find a *perfect answer* to its every claim; because there it will find, through believing, all ground of doubt and fear removed, the whole question of sin eternally settled,

every divine requirement fully met, and a solid foundation laid for present, settled peace in the presence of divine holiness. Christ, "delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification," settles everything. The moment we believe the gospel, we *are* saved, and ought to be divinely happy. "He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life." (Rom. iv., v.; John iii.)

We see the greatness of God's love to the sinner, in His judgment of sin, in the Person of His own dear Son, on the cross. There, God, in perfect grace to us, dealt with sin according to His infinite holiness and justice. He went down to the depths of our ruin, and all our sin, measured it, judged it, and put it forever away—*root* and *branch*—by shedding the precious blood of the spotless victim. "He condemned sin in the flesh"; that is, He there condemned the evil root of sin which is in our flesh —our carnal nature. But He also "made an end of sins" —of the actual sins of every believer. Thus, between God and Christ alone, the entire question of sin was gone into, and finally settled on the cross. "Simon Peter said unto Him, 'Lord, whither goest Thou?' Jesus answered Him, 'Whither I go, *thou canst not follow Me now*.'" Just as Abraham and Isaac were alone on the top of the mountain in the land of Moriah, so were God and Christ alone, amidst the solemnities and solitudes of Calvary. The only part we had in the cross was, that our *sins* were there. Jesus *alone* bore the full weight of their judgment. (Comp. Dan. ix. 24; Rom. viii. 3; 2 Cor. v. 21; Heb. ix. 26, 28.)

Whenever this blessed truth is learnt from God's own Word, and maintained in the soul by faith, through the power of the Holy Ghost, all is peace, joy and victory. It takes the believer completely away from himself, from his doubts, fears and questions; and his eye now gazes on ONE, who, by His finished work, has laid the foundation of divine and everlasting righteousness, and who is

now at the right hand of the Majesty in the highest, as the perfect definition of every true believer. With Him—with Him alone—the believer's heart is now to be occupied.

Faith is fully assured, that when *God* puts away sin, it must be put away entirely—that, when Jesus exclaimed, "IT IS FINISHED," the work was done, God was glorified, the sinner saved, the whole power of Satan completely destroyed, and peace established on the most solid basis. Hence, we find, "The God of *peace* brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." He was the God of *judgment* at the cross; He is the God of *peace* at the opening grave. Every enemy has been vanquished, and eternal peace proclaimed, through the blood of His cross. "He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father." He rose "in the power of an endless life," and associates every believer with Himself, in the power of that life in resurrection. Having been cleansed by His blood, they are accepted in His Person. (See Eph. i. 6; Col. ii. 10; 1 John v. 20.)

Jesus, having thus fully accomplished the work that was given Him to do, and gone up on high, the Holy Ghost came down as a witness to us that redemption was finished, the believer "perfected forever," and Christ glorified in heaven.

The apostles then began to publish the glad tidings of salvation to the chief of sinners. The subject of their preaching was, "*Jesus and the resurrection*"; and all who believed on Him as risen and glorified were immediately and eternally saved. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son: he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (1 John v. 11, 12.) There is no blessing outside of, or apart from, the PERSON OF CHRIST—THE HEAVENLY MAN; "for in Him dwelleth all

the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Ever since that time, God has been placing before the sinner, in connection with *His* gospel, a risen living Christ, as the ALONE object of faith, and "the end of the law for righteousness to EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH." (Rom. x.)

When the eye is kept on this heavenly Christ, all is light, joy and peace; but if it be turned in on self, and occupied with what it *finds* there, and what it *feels*, or with anything whatever that may come between the heart and Christ, all will be darkness, uncertainty and unhappiness in the soul. Oh! how blessedly simple is the gospel of the grace of God.

The burden of its message to the *lost sinner* is, "Come, for all things are now ready"; the question of sin is not raised—"*Grace reigns* through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Christ having perfectly satisfied God about sin, the only question now, between God and your heart, is this: *Are you perfectly satisfied with His Christ as the alone portion of your soul?* This is the one grand question of the gospel. Christ has settled every other to the glory of God, and now the Father is going to "make a marriage for His Son," to honor, exalt and glorify Him. Is your heart in full harmony with God's on this point? Work is not required at your hands —strength is not needed—fruit is not demanded—God has provided everything, and prepared everything. It is all grace—the pure grace of God—"only believe." "Come, for all things are now ready,"—the marriage supper, the wedding garment, royal honors, the Father's presence, fullness of joy, and pleasures for evermore—all are ready, —ready now—"ready to be revealed." Dear reader, are you ready? Oh! solemn question. Are you ready? Have you believed the message? Have you embraced the Son? Are you ready to "crown Him Lord of all"? The table is spread, the house is filling fast, "yet there is room." Already you have heard the midnight cry, "Be-

hold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him," "and they that were READY went in *with him* to the marriage, AND THE DOOR WAS SHUT." "Be ye therefore ready also; for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not." (Matt. xxii., xxv.; Luke xii., xiv.)

But I must now refer my reader to the "Notes" themselves, where he will find this most blessed subject fully, frequently and pointedly stated, and many other subjects of deep practical importance, such as the distinctive position and perfect unity of the Church of God, real saintship, practical discipleship, sonship, etc., etc.

With the exception of the four gospels, I suppose there is no book in the Bible more deeply interesting than the Book of Genesis. It comes to us with all the freshness of God's first book to His people. The contents are varied, highly instructive, and most precious to the student of God's entire book.

These "Notes" are again laid at the Master's feet, in earnest prayer that He would take them up and send them forth under the stamp of His own divine approval. Amen.

A. M.

London

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NOTES

ON

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

CHAPTER I

THERE is something peculiarly striking in the manner in which the Holy Ghost opens this sublime book. He introduces us at once to God, in the essential fullness of His Being, and the solitariness of His acting. All prefatory matter is omitted. It is to God we are brought. We hear Him, as it were, breaking earth's silence, and shining in upon earth's darkness, for the purpose of developing a sphere in which He might display His eternal power and Godhead.

There is nothing here on which idle curiosity may feed—nothing on which the poor, human mind may speculate. There is the sublimity and reality of DIVINE TRUTH, in its moral power to act on the heart and on the understanding. It could never come within the range of the Spirit of God to gratify idle curiosity, by the presentation of curious theories. Geologists may explore the bowels of the earth, and draw forth from thence materials from which to add to, and, in some instances, to contra-

dict, the divine record. They may speculate upon fossil remains; but the disciple hangs, with sacred delight, over the page of inspiration. He reads, believes and worships. In this spirit may we pursue our study of the profound book which now lies open before us. May we know what it is to "inquire in the temple." May our investigations of the precious contents of holy scripture be ever prosecuted in the true spirit of worship.

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." The first sentence in the divine canon sets us in the presence of Him who is the infinite source of all true blessedness. There is no elaborate argument in proof of the existence of God. The Holy Ghost could not enter upon anything of the kind. God reveals Himself. He makes Himself known by His works. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork." "All Thy works shall praise Thee, O Lord." "Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty." None but an infidel or an atheist would seek an argument in proof of the Being of One who, by the word of His mouth, called worlds into existence, and declared Himself the All-wise, the Almighty, and the everlasting God. Who but "God" could "create" anything? "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath *created* these things, that bringeth out their host by number; He calleth them all by names, by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one faileth." (Is. xl. 26.) "The gods

of the heathen are idols, but the Lord made the heavens." In the Book of Job (chap. xxxviii.–xli.) we have an appeal of the very grandest description, on the part of Jehovah Himself, to the work of creation, as an unanswerable argument in proof of His infinite superiority; and this appeal, while it sets before the understanding the most vivid and convincing demonstration of God's omnipotence, touches the heart also by its amazing condescension. The majesty and the love, the power and the tenderness, are all divine.

"And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." Here was, in good truth, a scene in which God alone could act. Man, in the pride of his heart, has since proved himself but too ready to interfere with God in other and far higher spheres of action; but, in the scene before us, man had no place until, indeed, he became, like all the rest, the subject of creative power. God was alone in creation. He looked forth from His eternal dwelling-place of light upon the wild waste, and there beheld the sphere in which His wondrous plans and counsels were yet to be unfolded and brought out—where the Second Person of the Eternal Trinity was yet to live and labor and testify and bleed and die, in order to display, in the view of wondering worlds, the glorious perfections of the Godhead. All was darkness and chaos; but God is the God of light and order. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." Darkness and confusion cannot live in His

presence, whether we look at it in a physical, moral, intellectual, or spiritual point of view.

"The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.' He sat brooding over the scene of His future operations. A dark scene, truly; and one in which there was ample room for the God of light and life to act. He alone could enlighten the darkness, cause life to spring up, substitute order for chaos, open an expanse between the waters, where life might display itself without fear of death. These were operations worthy of God.

"God said, 'Let there be light': and there was light." How simple! and yet how Godlike! "He spake, and it was done: He commanded, and it stood fast." Infidelity may ask, How? where? when? The answer is, "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." (Heb. xi. 3.) This satisfies the teachable spirit. Philosophy may smile contemptuously at this, and pronounce it rude ignorance, or blind credulity, suitable enough for an age of semi-barbarism, but quite unworthy of men living in an enlightened age of the world's history, when the museum and the telescope have put us in possession of facts of which the inspired penman knew nothing. What wisdom! What learning! Yea, rather, what folly! What nonesense! What total inability to grasp the scope and design of sacred scripture! It assuredly is not God's object to make us astronomers or geologists,

or to occupy us with details which the microscope or the telescope lays before every school-boy. His object is to lead us into His presence, as worshipers, with hearts and understandings taught and duly governed by His holy Word. But this would never do for the so-called philosopher, who, despising what he terms the vulgar and narrow-minded prejudices of the devout disciple of the Word, boldly seizes his telescope, and therewith scans the distant heavens, or travels into the deep recesses of earth in search of strata, formations and fossils —all of which, according to his account, greatly improve, if they do not flatly contradict, the inspired narrative.

With such "oppositions of science, falsely so called," we have nothing to do. We believe that all true discoveries, whether "in the heavens above, in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth," will harmonize with that which is written in the Word of God; and if they do not thus harmonize, they are perfectly contemptible in the judgment of every true lover of scripture. This gives great rest to the heart in a day like the present, so productive of learned speculations and high-sounding theories, which, alas! in too many instances, savor of rationalism and positive infidelity. It is most needful to have the heart thoroughly established as to the fullness, the authority, the completeness, the majesty, the plenary inspiration of the sacred volume. This will be found to be the only effectual safeguard against the rationalism

of Germany and the superstition of Rome. Accurate acquaintance with, and profound subjection to, the Word, are the great *desiderata* of the present moment. May the Lord, in His great grace, abundantly increase in our midst both the one and the other.

"And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night." Here we have the two great symbols so largely employed throughout the Word. The presence of light makes the day; the absence thereof makes the night. Thus it is in the history of souls. There are "the sons of light" and "the sons of darkness." This is a most marked and solemn distinction. All upon whom the light of Life has shone—all who have been effectually visited by "the dayspring from on high"—all who have received the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ—all such, whoever and wherever they may be, belong to the first class, are "the sons of light, and the sons of the day."

On the other hand, all who are still in nature's darkness, nature's blindness, nature's unbelief—all who have not yet received into their hearts, by faith, the cheering beams of the Sun of Righteousness,—all such are still wrapped in the shades of spiritual night, are "the sons of darkness," "the sons of the night."

Reader, pause and ask yourself, in the presence of the Searcher of hearts, to which of these two

classes do you, at this moment, belong. That you belong to either the one or the other is beyond all question. You may be poor, despised, unlettered; but if, through grace, there is a link connecting you with the Son of God—"the light of the world," then you are, in very deed, a son of the day, and destined, ere long, to shine in that celestial sphere, that region of glory, of which "the slain Lamb" will be the central sun forever. This is not your own doing. It is the result of the counsel and operation of God Himself, who has given you light and life, joy and peace, in Jesus and His accomplished sacrifice. But if you are a total stranger to the hallowed action and influence of divine light, if your eyes have not been opened to behold any beauty in the Son of God, then, though you had all the learning of a Newton, though you were enriched with all the treasures of human philosophy, though you had drunk in with avidity all the streams of human science, though your name were adorned with all the learned titles which the schools and universities of this world could bestow, yet are you "a son of the night," "a son of darkness"; and, if you die in your present condition, you will be involved in the blackness and horror of an eternal night. Do not, therefore, my friend, read another page until you have fully satisfied yourself as to whether you belong to the "day" or the "night."

The next point on which I would dwell is the creation of lights. "And God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the

day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years. And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth': and it was so. And God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: He made the stars also."

The sun is the great centre of light, and the centre of our system. Round him the lesser orbs revolve. From him, too, they derive their light. Hence he may very legitimately be viewed as an apt symbol of Him who is soon to arise, with healing in His wings, to gladden the hearts of those that fear the Lord. The aptness and beauty of the symbol would fully appear to one who, having spent the night in watching, beholds the rising sun gilding, with his bright beams, the eastern sky.

The mists and shades of night are all dispersed, and the whole creation seems to hail the returning orb of light. Thus will it be, by and by, when the Sun of Righteousness arises. The shadows of night shall flee away, and the whole creation shall be gladdened by the dawning of "a morning without clouds,"—the opening of a bright and never-ending day of glory.

The moon, being in herself opaque, derives all her light from the sun. She always reflects the sun's light, save when earth and its influences intervene.* No sooner has the sun sunk beneath our

* It is an interesting fact that the moon, as viewed through a powerful telescope, presents the appearance of one vast ruin of nature.

horizon than the moon presents herself to receive his beams and reflect them back upon a dark world; or should she be visible during the day, she always exhibits a pale light, the necessary result of appearing in the presence of superior brightness. True it is, as has been remarked, the world sometimes intervenes; dark clouds, thick mists, and chilling vapors too, arise from earth's surface, and hide from our view her silvery light.

Now, as the sun is a beautiful and an appropriate symbol of Christ, so the moon strikingly reminds us of the Church. The fountain of her light is hidden from view. The world seeth Him not, but she sees Him; and she is responsible to reflect His beams upon a benighted world. The world has no other way in which to learn anything of Christ but by the Church. "Ye," says the inspired apostle, "are our epistle, . . . known and read of all men." And again, "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ." (2 Cor. iii. 2, 3.)

What a responsible place! How earnestly should she watch against everything that would hinder the reflection of the heavenly light of Christ, in all her ways! But how is she to reflect this light? By allowing it to shine upon her, in its undimmed brightness. If the Church only walked in the light of Christ, she would assuredly reflect His light; and this would ever keep her in her proper position. The light of the moon is not her own. So is it with the Church. She is not called to set herself

before the world. She is a simple debtor to reflect the light which she herself receives. She is bound to study, with holy diligence, the path which He trod while down here, and, by the energy of the Holy Ghost, who dwells in her, to follow in that path. But, alas! earth, with its mists, its clouds and its vapors, intervenes, and hides the light and blots the epistle. The world can see but little of the traits of Christ's character in those who call themselves by His name; yea, in many instances they exhibit a humbling contrast rather than a resemblance. May we study Christ more prayerfully, that so we may copy Him more faithfully.

The stars are distant lights. They shine in other spheres, and have little connection with this system, save that their twinkling can be seen. "One star differeth from another star in glory." Thus will it be in the coming kingdom of the Son. He will shine forth in living and everlasting lustre. His body, the Church, will faithfully reflect His beams on all around, while the saints individually shall shine in those spheres which a righteous Judge shall allot to them, as a reward of faithful service during the dark night of His absence. This thought should animate us to a more ardent and vigorous pursuit after conformity to our absent Lord. (See Luke xix. 12–19.)

The lower orders of creation are next introduced. The sea and the earth are made to teem with life. Some may feel warranted in regarding the operations of each successive day, as foreshadowing the

various dispensations, and their great characteristic principles of action. I would only remark, as to this, that there is a great need, when handling the Word in this way, to watch, with holy jealousy, the working of imagination; and also to pay strict attention to the general analogy of scripture, else we may make sad mistakes. I do not feel at liberty to enter upon such a line of interpretation; I shall therefore confine myself to what I believe to be the plain sense of the sacred text.

We shall now consider man's place, as set over the works of God's hands. All having been set in order, one was needed to take the headship. "And God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let *them* have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.' So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He *him;* male and female created He *them.* And God blessed them, and God said unto them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.'" My reader will observe the change from "him" to "them." We are not presented with the actual fact of the formation of the woman until the next chapter; though here we find God blessing "them," and giving "them" jointly the place of universal government. All the inferior orders of

creation were set under their joint dominion. Eve received all her blessings in Adam: in him, too, she got her dignity. Though not yet called into actual existence, she was, in the purpose of God, looked at as part of the man. "In Thy book were all my members written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them."

Thus it is with the Church—the bride of the Second Man. She was viewed from all eternity in Christ, her Head and Lord; as we read in the first chapter of Ephesians, "According as He hath chosen us in Him, *before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Before a single member of the Church had yet breathed the breath of life, all were, in God's eternal mind, "predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son." The counsels of God render the Church necessary to complete the mystic man. Hence the Church is called "the fullness [πληρωμα] of Him that filleth all in all." This is an amazing title, and it develops much of the dignity, importance and glory of the Church.

It is too common to view redemption as bearing merely upon the blessedness and security of individual souls. This is entirely too low a view to take of the matter. That all which pertains in any way to the individual is, in the fullest manner, secured, is, blessed be God, most true. This is the least part of redemption. But that Christ's glory is involved in, and connected with, the Church's

existence, is a truth of far more dignity, depth and power. If I am entitled, on the authority of Holy Scripture, to regard myself as a constituent part of that which is actually needful to Christ, I can no longer entertain a doubt as to whether there is the fullest provision for all my personal necessities. And is not the Church thus needful to Christ? Yes, truly. "It is not good that *the* man should be alone; I will make him an helpmeet for him." And, again, "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. . . . Nevertheless, neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God." (1 Cor. xi. 8–12.) Hence, it is no longer the mere question whether God can save a poor, helpless sinner—whether He can blot out his sins, and receive him in the power of divine righteousness. God has said, "It is not good that the man should be alone." He left not "the first man" without "an helpmeet"; neither would He leave the "Second." As, in the case of the former, there would have been a blank in the creation without Eve, so,—stupendous thought!—in the case of the latter, there would be a blank in the new creation without the Bride—the Church.

Let us now look at the manner in which Eve was brought into being, though, in so doing, we shall have to anticipate part of the contents of the next

chapter. Throughout all the orders of creation there was not found a helpmeet for Adam. "A deep sleep" must fall on him, and a partner be formed, out of himself, to share his dominion and his blessedness. "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, builded* He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, 'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man.'" (Chap. ii. 21–23.)

Looking at Adam and Eve as a type of Christ and the Church, as Scripture fully warrants us to do, we see how that the death of Christ needed to be an accomplished fact ere the Church could be set up; though, in the purpose of God, she was looked at and chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. There is, however, a vast difference between the secret purpose of God and the revelation and accomplishment thereof. Before the divine purpose could be actualized in reference to the constituent parts of the Church, it was necessary that the Son should be rejected and crucified, —that He should take His seat on high,—that He

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*The Hebrew word which is rendered "builded" in the margin, is וַיִּבֶן which the LXX render by ὠκοδομεῦσεν. A reference to the original of Eph. ii. 20, 22 will show the reader that the words rendered "built" and "builded together" are inflections of the same verb.

should send down the Holy Ghost to baptize believers into one body. It is not that souls were not quickened and saved previous to the death of Christ. They assuredly were. Adam was saved, and thousands of others, from age to age, in virtue of the sacrifice of Christ, though that sacrifice was not yet accomplished. But the salvation of individual souls is one thing, and the formation of the Church, as a distinctive thing, by the Holy Ghost, is quite another.

This distinction is not sufficiently attended to; and even where it is in theory maintained, it is accompanied with but little of those practical results which might naturally be expected to flow from a truth so stupendous. The Church's unique place—her special relationship to "the Second Man, the Lord from heaven"—her distinctive privileges and dignities—all these would, if entered into by the power of the Holy Ghost, produce the richest, the rarest and the most fragrant fruits. (See Eph. v. 23–32.)

When we look at the type before us, we may form some idea of the results which ought to follow from the understanding of the Church's position and relationship. What affection did not Eve owe to Adam! What nearness she enjoyed! What intimacy of communion. What full participation in all his thoughts! In all his dignity, and in all his glory, she was entirely one. He did not rule *over*, but *with* her. He was lord of the whole creation, and she was one with him. Yea, as has already

been remarked, she was looked at and blessed *in* him. "The man" was the object; and as to "the woman," she was needful to him, and therefore she was brought into being. Nothing can be more profoundly interesting as a type. Man first set up, and the woman viewed in, and then formed out of, him,—all this forms a type of the most striking and instructive character. Not that a doctrine can ever be founded upon a type; but when we find the doctrine fully and clearly laid down in other parts of the Word, we are then prepared to understand, appreciate and admire the type.

The eighth psalm furnishes a fine view of man set over the work of God's hands,—"When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers; the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained: what is man that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that Thou visitest him? For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet,—all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea." Here, man is looked at without any distinctive mention of the woman; and this is quite in character, for the woman is looked at *in* the man.

There is no direct revelation of the mystery of the Church in any part of the Old Testament. The apostle expressly says, "In other ages it was not

made known to the sons of men as it is *now* revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets (of the New Testament) by the Spirit." (Eph. iii. 1–11.) Hence, in the psalm just quoted, we have only "the man" presented to us; but we know that the man and the woman are looked at under one head. All this will find its full antitype in the ages to come. Then shall the True Man—the Lord from heaven—take His seat on the throne, and, in companionship with His bride—the Church—rule over a restored creation. This Church is quickened out of the grave of Christ, is part "of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." He the Head and she the body, making one Man, as we read in the fourth chapter of Ephesians,—"Till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." The Church, being thus part of Christ, will occupy a place in the glory quite unique. There was no other creature so near to Adam as Eve, because no other creature was part of himself. So in reference to the Church, she will hold the very nearest place to Christ in His coming glory.

Nor is it merely what the Church *will* be that commands our admiration, but what the Church *is*. She is now the body of which Christ is the Head; she is now the temple of which God is the Inhabitant. Oh! what manner of people ought we to be? If such is the present, such the future dignity of that of which we, through God's grace, form a part,

surely a holy, a devoted, a separated, an elevated walk is what becomes us.

May the Holy Ghost unfold these things more fully and powerfully to our hearts, that so we may have a deeper sense of the conduct and character which are worthy of the high vocation wherewith we are called. "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all." (Eph. i. 18–23.)

CHAPTER II

THIS chapter introduces to our notice two prominent subjects, namely, "the seventh day" and "the river." The first of these demands special attention.

There are few subjects on which so much misunderstanding and contradiction prevails as the doctrine of "the Sabbath." Not that there is the slightest foundation for either the one or the other; for the whole subject is laid down in the Word in the simplest possible manner. The distinct *commandment* to "keep holy the Sabbath day" will come before us, the Lord permitting, in our meditations on the book of Exodus. In the chapter now before us, there is no command given to man whatever, but simply the record that "God rested on the seventh day." "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made." There is no commandment given to man here. We are simply told that God enjoyed His rest, because all was done, so far as the mere creation was concerned. There was nothing more to be done, and therefore the One who

had, during six days, been working, ceased to work, and enjoyed His rest. All was complete; all was very good; all was just as He Himself had made it; and He rested in it. "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." The work of creation was ended, and God was celebrating a Sabbath.

And, be it observed, that this is the true character of a Sabbath. This is the only Sabbath which God ever celebrated, so far as the inspired record instructs us. After this, we read of God's commanding man to keep the Sabbath, and man utterly failing so to do; but we never read again the words, "God rested"; on the contrary, the word is, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." (John v. 17.) The Sabbath, in the strict and proper sense of the term, could only be celebrated when there really was nothing to be done. It could only be celebrated amid an undefiled creation—a creation on which no spot of sin could be discerned. God can have no rest where there is sin; and one has only to look around him in order to learn the total impossibility of God's enjoying a rest in creation *now*. The thorn and the thistle, together with the ten thousand other melancholy and humiliating fruits of a groaning creation, rise before us, and declare that God must be at *work* and not at *rest*. Could God rest in the midst of thorns and briars? Could He rest amid the sighs and tears, the groans and sorrows, the sickness and death, the degredation and guilt of a ruined world! Could God sit down, as it were,

and celebrate a Sabbath in the midst of such circumstances?

Whatever answer may be given to these questions, the Word of God teaches us that God has had no Sabbath as yet, save the one which the second of Genesis records. "The seventh day," and none other, was the Sabbath. It showed forth the completeness of creation work; but creation work is marred, and the seventh day rest interrupted; and thus, from the fall to the incarnation, God was working; from the incarnation to the cross, God the Son was working; and from Pentecost until now, God the Holy Ghost has been working.

Assuredly, Christ had no Sabbath when He was upon this earth. True, He finished His work—blessedly, gloriously finished it—but where did He spend the Sabbath day? *In the tomb!* Yes, my reader, the Lord Christ—God manifest in the flesh, the Lord of the Sabbath, the Maker and Sustainer of heaven and earth—spent the seventh day in the dark and silent tomb. Has this no voice for us? Does it convey no teaching? Could the Son of God lie in the grave on the seventh day if that day were to be spent in rest and peace, and in the full sense that nothing remained to be done? Impossible! We want no further proof of the impossibility of celebrating a Sabbath than that which is afforded at the grave of Jesus. We may stand beside that grave amazed to find it occupied by such an one on the seventh day; but, oh! the reason is obvious. Man is a fallen, ruined, guilty creature. His long

career of guilt has ended in crucifying the Lord of glory; and not only crucifying Him, but placing a great stone at the mouth of the tomb, to prevent, if possible, His leaving it.

And what was man doing while the Son of God was in the grave? He was observing the Sabbath day! What a thought! Christ in His grave to repair a broken Sabbath, and yet man attempting to keep the Sabbath as though it were not broken at all! It was *man's* Sabbath, and not God's. It was a Sabbath without Christ—an empty, powerless, worthless, because Christless and Godless, form.

But some will say, The day has been changed, while all the principles belonging to it remain the same. I do not believe that Scripture furnishes any foundation for such an idea. Where is the divine warrant for such a statement? Surely, if there is Scripture authority, nothing can be easier than to produce it. But the fact is, there is none; on the contrary, the distinction is most fully maintained in the New Testament. Take one remarkable passage, in proof,—"In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week." (Matt. xxviii. 1.) There is, evidently, no mention here of the seventh day being changed to the first day; nor yet of any transfer of the Sabbath from the one to the other. The first day of the week is not the Sabbath changed, but altogether a new day. It is the first day of a new period, and not the last day of an old. The seventh day stands connected with earth and earthly rest; the first

day of the week, on the contrary, introduces us to heaven and heavenly rest.

This makes a vast difference in the principle; and when we look at the matter in a practical point of view, the difference is most material. If I celebrate the seventh day, it marks me as an earthly man, inasmuch as that day is clearly the rest of earth—creation rest; but if I am taught by the Word and Spirit of God to understand the meaning of the first day of the week, I shall at once apprehend its immediate connection with that new and heavenly order of things, of which the death and resurrection of Christ form the everlasting foundation. The seventh day appertained to Israel and to earth: the first day of the week appertains to the Church and to heaven. Further, Israel was *commanded* to observe the Sabbath day: the Church is *privileged* to enjoy the first day of the week. The former was the *test* of Israel's moral condition; the latter is the significant *proof* of the Church's eternal acceptance. That made manifest what Israel *could do* for God: this perfectly declares what God *has done* for us.

It is quite impossible to over-estimate the value and importance of the Lord's day [η κυριακη ημερα], as the first day of the week is termed, in the first chapter of the Apocalypse. Being the day on which Christ rose from the dead, it sets forth, not the completion of creation, but the full and glorious triumph of redemption. Nor should we regard the celebration of the first day of the week as a matter

of bondage, or as a yoke put on the neck of a Christian. It is his delight to celebrate that happy day. Hence we find that the first day of the week was pre-eminently the day on which the early Christians came together to break bread; and at that period of the Church's history, the distinction between the Sabbath and the first day of the week was fully maintained. The Jews celebrated the former by assembling in their synagogues to read "the law and the prophets"; the Christians celebrated the latter by assembling to break bread. There is not so much as a single passage of Scripture in which the first day of the week is called the Sabbath day, whereas there is the most abundant proof of their entire distinctness.

Why, therefore, contend for that which has no foundation in the Word? Love, honor and celebrate the Lord's day as much as possible; seek, like the apostle, to be "in the spirit" thereon; let your retirement from secular matters be as profound as ever you can make it; but, while you do all this, call it by its proper name; give it its proper place; understand its proper principles; attach to it its proper characteristics; and, above all, do not bind down the Christian, as with an iron rule, to observe the seventh day, when it is his high and holy privilege to observe the first. Do not bring him down from heaven, where he can rest, to a cursed and blood-stained earth, where he cannot. Do not ask him to keep a day which his Master spent in the tomb, instead of that blessed day on which He left

it. (See, carefully, Matt. xxviii. 1–6; Mark xvi. 1, 2; Luke xxiv. 1; John xx. 1, 19, 26; Acts xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 2; Rev. i. 10; Acts xiii. 14; xvii. 2; Col. ii. 16.)

But let it not be supposed that we lose sight of the important fact that the Sabbath will again be celebrated in the land of Israel, and over the whole creation. It assuredly will. "There remaineth a rest [σαββατισμός] for the people of God." (Heb. iv. 9.) When the Son of Abraham, Son of David, and Son of Man, shall assume His position of government over the whole earth, there will be a glorious Sabbath—a rest which sin shall never interrupt. But now, He is rejected, and all who know and love Him are called to take their place with Him in His rejection; they are called to "go forth to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." (Heb. xiii. 13.) If earth could keep a Sabbath, there would be no reproach; but the very fact of the professing church's seeking to make the first day of the week the Sabbath, reveals a deep principle. It is but the effort to get back to an earthly standing, and to an earthly code of morals.

Many may not see this. Many true Christians may, most conscientiously, observe the Sabbath day, as such; and we are bound to honor their consciences, though we are perfectly warranted in asking them to furnish a scriptural basis for their conscientious convictions. We would not stumble or wound their conscience, but we would seek to instruct it. However, we are not now occupied

with conscience or its convictions, but only with the principle which lies at the root of what may be termed the Sabbath question; and I would only put the question to the Christian reader, which is more consonant with the entire scope and spirit of the New Testament,—The celebration of the seventh day or Sabbath, or the celebration of the first day of the week or the Lord's day.*

* This subject will, if the Lord permit, come before us again in the twentieth chapter of Exodus; but I would here observe, that very much of the offence and misunderstanding connected with the important subject of the Sabbath, may be justly traced to the inconsiderate and injudicious conduct of some who, in their zeal for what they termed Christian liberty, in reference to the Sabbath, rather lose sight of the claims of honest consciences, and also of the place which the Lord's day occupies in the New Testament. Some have been known to enter upon their weekly avocations, simply to show their liberty, and thus they caused much needless offence. Such acting could never have been suggested by the Spirit of Christ. If I am ever so clear and free in my own mind, I should respect the consciences of my brethren; and, moreover, I do not believe that those who so carry themselves, really understand the true and precious privileges connected with the Lord's day. We should only be too thankful to be rid of all secular occupation and distraction, to think of having recourse to them for the purpose of showing our liberty. The good providence of our God has so arranged for His people throughout the British Empire, that they can, without pecuniary loss, enjoy the rest of the Lord's day, inasmuch as all are obliged to abstain from business. This must be regarded by every well-regulated mind, as a mercy; for, if it were not thus ordered, we know how man's covetous heart would, if possible, rob the Christian of the sweet privilege of attending the assembly on the Lord's day. And who can tell what would be the deadening effect of uninterrupted engagement with this world's traffic? Those Christians who, from Monday morning to Saturday night, breathe the dense atmosphere of the mart, the market and the manufactory, can form some idea of it.

It cannot be regarded as a good sign to find men introducing measures for the public profanation of the Lord's day. It assuredly marks the progress of infidelity and French influence.

We shall now consider the connection between the Sabbath and the river flowing out of Eden. There is much interest in this. It is the first notice we get of "the river of God," which is here introduced in connection with God's rest. When God was resting in His works, the whole world felt the blessing and refreshment thereof. It was impossible for God to keep a Sabbath, and earth not to feel its sacred influence. But, alas! the streams which flowed forth from Eden—the scene of earthly rest—were speedily interrupted, because the rest of creation was marred by sin.

Yet, blessed be God, sin did not put a stop to His activities, but only gave them a new sphere; and wherever He is seen acting, the river is seen flowing. Thus, when we find Him, with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, conducting His ransomed hosts across the sterile sand of the desert, there we see the stream flowing forth, not from Eden, but from the smitten Rock—apt and beautiful expression of the ground on which sovereign

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But there are some who teach that the expression η κυριακη ημερα, which is rightly enough translated, "the Lord's day," refers to "the day of the Lord," and that the exiled apostle found himself carried forward, as it were, into the spirit of the day of the Lord. I do not believe the original would bear such an interpretation; and, besides, we have in 1 Thess. v. 2, and 2 Peter iii. 10 the exact words, "the day of the Lord," the original of which is quite different from the expression above referred to, being, not η κυριακη ημερα, but η ημερα κυριου. This entirely settles the matter, so far as the mere criticism is concerned; and as to interpretation, it is plain that by far the greater portion of the Apocalypse is occupied, not with "the day of the Lord," but with events prior thereto.

grace ministers to the need of sinners! This was redemption and not merely creation. "That rock was Christ," Christ smitten to meet His people's need. The smitten Rock was connected with Jehovah's place in the Tabernacle; and truly there was moral beauty in the connection. God dwelling in curtains, and Israel drinking from a smitten rock, had a voice for every opened ear, and a deep lesson for every circumcised heart. (Exod. xvii. 6.)

Passing onward, in the history of God's ways, we find the river flowing in another channel. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.'" (John vii. 37, 38.) Here, then, we find the river emanating from another source, and flowing through another channel; though, in one sense, the source of the river was ever the same, being God Himself; but then it was God known in a new relationship and upon a new principle. Thus, in the passage just quoted, the Lord Jesus was taking His place, in spirit, outside of the whole existing order of things, and presenting Himself as the Source of the river of living water, of which river the person of the believer was to be the channel. Eden of old was constituted a debtor to the whole earth to send forth the fertilizing streams; and in the desert, the rock, when smitten, became a debtor to Israel's thirsty hosts. Just so now, every one who believes in Jesus is a debtor to

the scene around him to allow the streams of refreshment to flow forth from him.

The Christian should regard himself as the channel through which the manifold grace of Christ may flow out to a needy world; and the more freely he communicates, the more freely will he receive, "for there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty." This places the believer in a place of sweetest privilege, and, at the same time, of the most solemn responsibility. He is called to be the constant witness and exhibiter of the grace of Him on whom He believes.

Now, the more he enters into the privilege, the more will he answer the responsibility. If he is habitually feeding upon Christ, he cannot avoid exhibiting Him. The more the Holy Spirit keeps the Christian's eye fixed on Jesus, the more will his heart be occupied with His adorable Person, and his life and character bear unequivocal testimony to His grace. Faith is at once the power of ministry, the power of testimony, and the power of worship. If we are not living "by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave Himself for us," we shall neither be effectual servants, faithful witnesses, nor true worshipers. We may be doing a great deal, but it will not be service to Christ: we may be saying a great deal, but it will not be testimony for Christ: we may exhibit a great deal of piety and devotion, but it will not be spiritual and true worship.

Finally, we have the river of God presented to us in the last chapter of the Apocalypse.* "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High." This is the last place in which we find the river. Its source can never again be touched, its channel never again interrupted. "The throne of God" is expressive of eternal stability, and the presence of the Lamb marks it as based upon the immediate ground of accomplished redemption. It is not God's throne in creation, nor in providence, but in redemption. When I see *the Lamb*, I know its connection with me as *a sinner*. "The throne of God," as such, would but deter me; but when God reveals Himself in the Person of the Lamb, the heart is attracted, and the conscience tranquilized.

The blood of the Lamb cleanses the conscience from every speck and stain of sin, and sets it, in perfect freedom, in the presence of a holiness which cannot tolerate sin. In the cross, all the claims of divine holiness were perfectly answered; so that the more I understand the latter, the more I appreciate the former. The higher our estimate of holiness, the higher will be our estimate of the work of the cross. "Grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Hence the Psalmist calls on the saints to give thanks at the

*Compare, also, Ezekiel xlvii. 1-12, and Zech. xiv. 8.

remembrance of God's holiness. This is a precious fruit of a perfect redemption. Before ever a sinner can give thanks at the remembrance of God's holiness, he must look at it by faith, from the resurrection side of the cross.

Having thus traced the river, from Genesis to Revelation, we shall briefly look at Adam's position in Eden. We have seen him as a type of Christ; but he is not merely to be viewed typically, but personally—not merely as absolutely shadowing forth "the second Man, the Lord from heaven," but also as standing in the place of personal responsibility. In the midst of the fair scene of creation, the Lord God set up a testimony, and this testimony was also a test for the creature. It spoke of *death* in the midst of *life*. "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Strange, solemn sound! Yet it was a needed sound. Adam's life was suspended upon his strict obedience. The link which connected him with the Lord God* was obedience,

* My reader will observe the change in the second chapter from the expression "God" to "Lord God." There is much importance in the distinction. When God is seen acting in relation with man, He takes the title "Lord God"—(Jehovah Elohim); but until man appears on the scene, the word "Lord" is not used. I shall just point out three out of many passages in which the distinction is very strikingly presented. "And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as *God* (Elohim) had commanded him; and the *Lord* (Jehovah) shut him in." (Gen. vii. 16.) Elohim was going to destroy the world which He had made, but Jehovah took care of the man with whom He stood in relation. Again,—"That all the earth may know that there is a God (Elohim) in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord (Jehovah) saveth," etc. (1 Sam. xvii. 46, 47.) All the earth was to recognize the presence of Elohim; but Israel was called to recognize the actings of Jehovah,

based on implicit confidence in the One who had set him in his position of dignity—confidence in His truth—confidence in His love. He could obey only while he confided. We shall see the truth and force of this more fully when we come to examine the next chapter.

I would here suggest to my reader the remarkable contrast between the testimony set up in Eden and that which is set up now. Then, when all around was *life*, God spoke of *death;* now, on the contrary, when all around is death, God speaks of life: then, the word was, "in the day thou eatest thou shalt *die*"; now, the word is, "believe and *live*." And, as in Eden the enemy sought to make void God's testimony as to the result of eating the fruit, so now he seeks to make void God's testimony as to the result of believing the gospel. God had said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely *die*"; but the serpent said, "Ye shall not surely *die*." And now, when God's Word plainly declares that "he that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting *life*" (John iii. 36.), the same serpent seeks to persuade people that they have *not* everlasting *life*, nor should they presume to think of such a thing until they have first *done*, *felt* and *experienced* all manner of things.

My beloved reader, if you have not yet heartily

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with whom they stood in relation. Lastly,—"Jehoshaphat cried out, and *the Lord* (Jehovah) helped him; and *God* (Elohim) moved *them* to depart from him." (2 Chron. xviii. 31.) Jehovah took care of His poor erring servant; but Elohim, though unknown, acted upon the hearts of the uncircumcised Syrians.

believed the divine record, let me beseech you to allow "the voice of the Lord" to prevail above the hiss of the serpent. "He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." (John v. 24.)

CHAPTER III

THIS section of our book sets before us the breaking up of the whole scene on which we have been dwelling. It abounds in very weighty principles, and has very justly been, in all ages, resorted to as a most fruitful theme for those who desired to set forth the truth as to man's ruin and God's remedy. The serpent enters with a bold question as to divine revelation—terrible model and forerunner of all infidel questions since raised by those who have, alas! too faithfully served the serpent's cause in the world—questions which are only to be met by the supreme authority and divine majesty of Holy Scripture.

"Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" This was Satan's crafty inquiry; and had the Word of God been dwelling richly in Eve's heart, her answer might have been direct, simple and conclusive. The true way in which to meet Satan's questions and suggestions, is

to treat them as his, and repel them by the Word. To let them near the heart for a moment is to lose the only power by which to answer them. The devil did not openly present himself and say, I am the devil, the enemy of God, and I am come to traduce Him and ruin you. This would not be serpent-like; and yet he really did all this *by raising questions* in the mind of the creature. To admit the question, "Hath God said?" when I know that God has spoken, is positive infidelity; and the very fact of my admitting it, proves my total incapacity to meet it. Hence, in Eve's case, the form of her reply evidenced the fact that she had admitted to her heart the serpent's crafty inquiry. Instead of adhering strictly to the exact words of God, she, in her reply, actually adds thereto.

Now, either to add to or take from God's Word, proves very clearly that His Word is not dwelling in my heart or governing my conscience. If a man is finding his enjoyment in obedience, if it is his meat and his drink, if he is living by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of Jehovah, he will assuredly be acquainted with, and fully alive to, His Word. He could not be indifferent to it. The Lord Jesus, in His conflict with Satan, accurately applied the Word, because He lived upon it, and esteemed it more than His necessary food. He could not misquote or misapply the Word, neither could He be indifferent about it. Not so Eve. She added to what God had said. His command was simple enough,—"Thou shalt not eat of it." To

this Eve adds her own words,—"neither shall ye touch it." These were Eve's words and not God's. He had said nothing about touching; so that whether her misquotation proceeded from ignorance, or indifference, or a desire to represent God in an arbitrary light, or from all three together, it is plain that she was entirely off the true ground of simple confidence in, and subjection to, God's holy Word. "By the words of Thy mouth, I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." Psa. 17:4

Nothing can possess more commanding interest than the way in which the Word is everywhere put forward throughout the sacred canon, together with the immense importance of strict obedience thereto. Obedience is due from us to God's Word, simply because it is His Word. To raise a question, when He has spoken, is blasphemy. We are in the place of a creature. He is the Creator; He may, therefore, justly claim obedience from us. The infidel may call this "blind obedience," but the Christian calls this intelligent obedience, inasmuch as it is based upon the knowledge that it is God's Word to which he is obedient. If a man had not God's Word, he might well be said to be in blindness and darkness, for there is not so much as a single ray of divine light within or around us but what emanates from God's pure and eternal Word. All that we want to know is that God has spoken, and then obedience becomes the very highest order of intelligent acting. When the soul gets up to God, it has reached the very highest source of authority. No

man, nor body of men, can claim obedience to their word, because it is theirs; and hence the claims of the Church of Rome are arrogant and impious. In her claiming obedience, she usurps the prerogative of God; and all who yield it, rob God of His right. She presumes to place herself between God and the conscience; and who can do this with impunity? When God speaks, man is bound to obey. Happy is he if he does so: woe be to him if he does not. Infidelity may question if God has spoken; superstition may place human authority between my conscience and what God has spoken; by both alike I am effectually robbed of the Word, and, as a consequence, of the deep blessedness of obedience.

There is blessing in every act of obedience; but the moment the soul hesitates, the enemy has the advantage, and he will assuredly use it to thrust the soul further and further from God. Thus, in the chapter before us, the question, "Hath God said?" was followed by, "Ye shall not surely die." That is to say, there was first the question raised as to whether God had spoken, and then followed the open contradiction of what God had said. This solemn fact is abundantly sufficient to show how dangerous it is to admit near the heart a question as to divine revelation in its fullness and integrity. A refined rationalism is very near akin to bold infidelity, and the infidelity that dares to judge God's Word is not far from the atheism that denies His existence. Eve would never have stood by to hear God contradicted

if she had not previously fallen into looseness and indifference as to His Word. She, too, had her "Phases of Faith," or, to speak more correctly, her phases of infidelity: she suffered God to be contradicted by a creature, simply because His Word had lost its proper authority over her heart, her conscience and her understanding.

This furnishes a most solemn warning to all who are in danger of being ensnared by an unhallowed rationalism. There is no true security save in a profound faith in the plenary inspiration and supreme authority of "ALL SCRIPTURE." The soul that is endowed with this has a triumphant answer to every objector, whether he issue from Rome or Germany. "There is nothing new under the sun." The self-same evil which is now corrupting the very springs of religious thought and feeling throughout the fairest portion of the continent of Europe, was that which laid Eve's heart in ruin's in the garden of Eden. The first step in her downward course was her hearkening to the question, "Hath God said"; and then onward she went, from stage to stage, until at length she bowed before the serpent, and owned him as her god and the fountain of truth. Yes, my reader, the serpent displaced God, and the serpent's lie God's truth. Thus it was with fallen man, and thus it is with fallen man's posterity. God's Word has no place in the heart of the unregenerated man, but the lie of the serpent has. Let the formation of man's heart be examined, and it will be found that there is a place therein for

Satan's lie, but none whatever for the truth of God. Hence the force of the word to Nicodemus—"Ye must be born again."

But it is important to observe the mode in which the serpent sought to shake Eve's confidence in God's truth, and thus bring her under the power of infidel "*reason*." It was by shaking her confidence in God's love. He sought to shake her confidence in what God had said by showing that the testimony was not founded in love. "For," said he, "God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." (Ver. 5.) In other words, There is positive advantage connected with the eating of that fruit of which God is seeking to deprive you; why, therefore, should you believe God's testimony? You cannot place confidence in one who manifestly does not love you; for if He loved you, why should He prohibit your enjoying a positive privilege?

Eve's security against the influence of all this reasoning would have been simple repose in the infinite goodness of God. She should have said to the serpent, I have the fullest confidence in God's goodness, and therefore I deem it impossible that He could withhold any real good from me. If that fruit were good for me, I should surely have it; but the fact of its being forbidden by God proves that I would be no better, but much worse off by the eating of it. I am convinced of God's *love*, and I am convinced of God's *truth*, and I believe, too, that

you are an evil one come to draw my heart away from the fountain of goodness and truth. Get thee behind me, Satan. This would have been a noble reply; but it was not given. Her confidence in truth and love gave way, and all was lost; and so we find that there is just as little place in the heart of fallen man for God's love as there is for God's truth. The heart of man is a stranger to both the one and the other until renewed by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Now, it is deeply interesting to turn from Satan's lie in reference to the truth and love of God, to the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ, who came from the bosom of the Father in order to reveal what He really is. "Grace and truth"—the very things which man lost in his fall—"came by Jesus Christ." (John i. 17.) He was "the faithful witness" of what God was. (Rev. i. 5.) Truth reveals God as He is, but this truth is connected with the revelation of perfect grace; and thus the sinner finds, to his unspeakable joy, that the revelation of what God is, instead of being his destruction, becomes the basis of his eternal salvation. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." (John xvii. 3.) I cannot know God and not have life. The loss of the knowledge of God was death; but the knowledge of God is life. This necessarily makes life a thing entirely outside of ourselves, and dependent upon what God is. Let me arrive at what amount of self-knowledge I may, it is not said that this is

life eternal, to know themselves; though, no doubt, the knowledge of God and the knowledge of self will go very much together; still, "eternal life" is connected with the former, and not with the latter. To know God as He is, is life; and "all who know not God" shall be "punished with everlasting destruction from His presence."

It is of the utmost importance to see that what really stamps man's character and condition is his ignorance or knowledge of God. This it is that marks his character here, and fixes his destiny hereafter. Is he evil in his thoughts, evil in his words, evil in his actions,—it is all the result of his being ignorant of God. On the other hand, is he pure in thought, holy in conversation, gracious in action,—it is but the practical result of his knowledge of God. So also as to the future. To know God, is the solid ground of endless bliss—everlasting glory: to know Him not, is "everlasting destruction." Thus the knowledge of God is everything. It quickens the soul, purifies the heart, tranquilizes the conscience, elevates the affections, sanctifies the entire character and conduct.

Need we wonder, therefore, that Satan's grand design was to rob the creature of the true knowledge of the only true God? He misrepresented the blessed God: he said He was not kind. This was the secret spring of all the mischief. It matters not what shape sin has since taken—it matters not through what channel it has flowed, under what head it has ranged itself, or in what garb it has

clothed itself; it is all to be traced to this one thing, namely, ignorance of God. The most refined and cultivated moralist, the most devout religionist, the most benevolent philanthropist, if ignorant of God, is as far from life and true holiness as the publican and the harlot. The prodigal was just as much a sinner, and as positively away from the Father, when he had crossed the threshold as when he was feeding swine in the far country (Luke xv. 13–15.). So, in Eve's case, the moment she took herself out of the hands of God—out of the position of absolute dependence upon, and subjection to, His Word, she abandoned herself to the government of sense, as used of Satan for her entire overthrow.

The sixth verse presents three things; namely, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life"; which three, as the apostle states, comprehend "all that is in the world." These things necessarily took the lead when God was shut out. If I do not abide in the happy assurance of God's love and truth—His grace and faithfulness, I shall surrender myself to the government of some one or, it may be, all of the above principles; and this is only another name for the government of Satan. There is, strictly speaking, no such thing as man's free-will. If man be self-governed, he is really governed by Satan; and if not, he is governed by God.

Now, the three great agencies by which Satan works are "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." These were the things pre-

sented by Satan to the Lord Jesus in the temptation. He began by tempting the Second Man to take Himself out of the position of absolute dependence upon God. "Command these stones that they be made bread." He asked Him to do this, not, as in the case of the first man, to make Himself what He was not, but to prove what He was. Then followed the offer of the kingdoms of the world, with all their glory. And, finally, conducting Him to a pinnacle of the temple, he tempted Him to give Himself, suddenly and miraculously, to the admiration of the assembled people below. (Comp. Matt. iv. 1–11 with Luke iv. 1–13.) The plain design of each temptation was to induce the blessed One to step from the position of entire dependence upon God, and perfect subjection to His will; but all in vain. "*It is written*" was the unvarying reply of the only dependent, self-emptied, perfect man. Others might undertake to manage for themselves; none but God should manage for Him.

What an example for the faithful, under all their circumstances! Jesus kept close to Scripture, and thus conquered; without any other weapon, save the Sword of the Spirit, He stood in the conflict, and gained a glorious triumph. What a contrast with the first Adam! The One had everything to plead for God, the other had everything to plead against Him. The garden, with all its delights, in the one case; the wilderness, with all its privations, in the other: confidence in Satan, in the one case; confidence in God in the other: complete defeat in

the one case; complete victory in the other. Blessed forever be the God of all grace, who has laid our help on One so mighty to conquer—mighty to save!

Let us now inquire how far Adam and Eve realized the serpent's promised advantage. This inquiry will lead us to a deeply important point in connection with the fall of man. The Lord God had so ordered it, that in and by the fall, man should get what previously he had not, and that was, *a conscience*, a knowledge of both good and evil. This, man evidently could not have had before. He could not have known aught about evil, inasmuch as evil was was not there to be known. He was in a state of innocence, which is a state of ignorance of evil. Man got a conscience in and by the fall, and we find that the very first effect of conscience was to make him a coward. Satan had utterly deceived the woman. He had said, "your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil"; but he had left out a material part of the truth, namely, that they should know good without the power to do it, and that they should know evil without the power to avoid it. Their very attempt to elevate themselves in the scale of moral existence involved the loss of true elevation. They became degraded, powerless, Satan-enslaved, conscience-smitten, terrified creatures. "The eyes of them both were opened," no doubt; but, alas! to what a sight!—it was only to discover their own nakedness. They opened their eyes upon their own condition, which was "wretched and miserable and

poor and blind and naked." "They knew that they were naked"—sad fruit of the tree of knowledge! It was not any fresh knowledge of divine excellency they had attained—no fresh beams of divine light from the pure and eternal fountain thereof—alas! no; the very earliest result of their disobedient effort after knowledge, was the discovery that they were naked.

Now, it is well to understand this; well, too, to know how conscience works,—to see that it can only make cowards of us, as being the consciousness of what we are. Many are astray as to this; they think that conscience will bring us to God. Did it operate thus in the case of Adam and Eve? Assuredly not. Nor will it in the case of any sinner. How could it? How could the sense of what *I am* ever bring me to God, if not accompanied by the faith of what *God is?* Impossible. It will produce shame, self-reproach, remorse, anguish. It may also give birth to certain efforts on my part to remedy the condition which it discloses; but these very efforts, so far from drawing us to God, rather act as a blind to hide Him from our view. Thus, in the case of Adam and Eve, the discovery of their nakedness was followed by an effort of their own to cover it,—"they sewed fig-leaves together and made themselves aprons." This is the first record we have of man's attempt to remedy, by his own device, his condition, and the attentive consideration thereof will afford us not a little instruction as to the real character of human religiousness in all ages. In the

first place, we see, not only in Adam's case, but in every case, that man's effort to remedy his condition is based upon the sense of his nakedness. He is confessedly naked, and all his works are the result of his being so. This can never avail. I must know that I am clothed, before I can do anything acceptable in the sight of God.

And this, be it observed, is the difference between true Christianity and human religiousness. The former is founded upon the fact of a man's being clothed; the latter, upon the fact of his being naked. The former has for its starting-post what the latter has for its goal. All that a true Christian does, is because he is clothed—perfectly clothed; all that a mere religionist does, is in order that he may be clothed. This makes a vast difference. The more we examine the genius of man's religion, in all its phases, the more we shall see its thorough insufficiency to remedy his state, or even to meet his own sense thereof. It may do very well for a time, it may avail so long as death, judgment and the wrath of God are looked at from a distance, if looked at at all; but when a man comes to look these terrible realities straight in the face, he will find, in good truth, that his religion is a bed too short for him to stretch himself upon, and a covering too narrow for him to wrap himself in.

The moment Adam heard the voice of the Lord God, in Eden, "*he was afraid*," because, as he himself confessed, "I was naked." Yes, naked, although he had his apron on him. But it is plain

that that covering did not even satisfy his own conscience. Had his conscience been divinely satisfied, he would not have been afraid. "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." (1 John iii. 20, 21.) But if even the human conscience cannot find repose in man's religious efforts, how much less can the holiness of God. Adam's apron could not screen him from the eye of God, and he could not stand in His presence naked; therefore he fled to hide himself. This is what conscience will do at all times. It will cause man to hide himself from God; and, moreover, all that his own religiousness offers him is a hiding-place from God. This is a miserable provision, inasmuch as he must meet God some time or other, and if he has naught save the sad conscience of what he is, he must be afraid—yea, he must be wretched. Indeed, nothing is needed, save hell itself, to complete the misery of one who feels he has to meet God, and knows only his own unfitness to meet Him.

Had Adam known God's perfect love, he would not have been afraid. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." (1 John iv. 17, 18.) But Adam knew not this, because he had believed the serpent's lie. He thought that God was anything but love, and therefore the very last thought of his heart would have been to venture into His presence. He could not do it. Sin was there, and God and sin can never meet. So long as there is sin on the conscience, there must

be the sense of distance from God. "He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity." (Hab. i. 13.) Holiness and sin cannot dwell together. Sin, wherever it is found, can only be met by the wrath of God.

But, blessed be God, there is something beside the *conscience of what I am*. There is *the revelation of what He is;* and this latter the fall of man really brought out. God had not revealed Himself fully in creation: He had shown "His eternal power and Godhead [θειοτης],*" but He had not told out all the deep secrets of His nature and character. Wherefore Satan made a grand mistake in coming to meddle with God's creation. He only proved to be the instrument of his own eternal defeat and confusion, and "his violent dealing" shall forever "come down upon his own pate." His *lie* only gave occasion for the display of the full *truth* in reference to God. Creation never could have brought out what God was. There was infinitely more in Him than power and wisdom: there was love, mercy, holiness, righteousness, goodness, tenderness, long-suffering. Where could these be displayed but in a world of sinners? God, at the first, came down to *create;* and then, when the serpent presumed to

*There is a profoundly interesting thought suggested by comparing the word θειοτης (Rom. i. 20.) with the word θεοτης (Col. ii. 9.) They are both rendered "Godhead," but they present a very different thought. The heathen might have seen that there was something superhuman—something divine—in creation; but pure, essential, incomprehensible Deity dwelt in the adorable Person of the Son.

meddle with creation, God came down to *save*. This is brought out in the first words uttered by the Lord God after man's fall. "And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, 'Where art thou?'" This question proved two things,—it proved that man was lost, and that God had come to seek,—it proved man's sin and God's grace. "Where art thou?" Amazing faithfulness! Amazing grace! Faithfulness, to disclose, in the very question itself, the truth as to man's condition: grace, to bring out, in the very fact of God's asking such a question, the truth as to His character and attitude in reference to fallen man. Man was lost; but God had come down to look for him—to bring him out of his hiding-place behind the trees of the garden, in order that, in the happy confidence of faith, he might find a hiding-place in Himself. This was grace. To create man out of the dust of the ground was *power;* but to seek man in his lost estate was *grace*. But who can utter all that is wrapped up in the idea of God's being *a seeker?* God seeking a sinner! What could the blessed One have seen in man to lead Him to seek for him? Just what the shepherd saw in the lost sheep, or what the woman saw in the lost piece of silver, or what the father saw in the lost son. The sinner is valuable to God; but why he should be so, eternity alone will unfold.

How, then, did the sinner reply to the faithful and gracious inquiry of the blessed God? Alas! the reply only reveals the awful depth of evil into which

he had fallen. "And he said, 'I heard Thy voice in the garden and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.' And He said, 'Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?' And the man said, 'The woman whom *Thou gavest* to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.'" Here we find him actually laying the blame of his shameful fall on the circumstances in which God had placed him, and thus, indirectly, upon God Himself. This has ever been the way with fallen man,—every one and everything is blamed but *self*. In the case of true conviction, the very reverse is exhibited. "Is it not *I* that have sinned?" is the inquiry of a truly humbled soul. Had Adam known himself, how different would have been his style! But he neither knew himself nor God, and, therefore, instead of throwing the blame entirely upon himself, he threw it upon God.

Here, then, was man's terrible position. He had lost all. His dominion, his dignity, his happiness, his innocence, his purity, his peace—all was gone from him; and, what was still worse, he accused God of being the cause of it.* There he stood, a

*Man not only accuses God of being the author of his fall, but also blames Him for his non-recovery. How often do we hear persons say that they cannot believe unless God gives them the power to believe; and, further, that unless they are the subjects of God's eternal decree, they cannot be saved.

Now, it is perfectly true that no man can believe the gospel except by the power of the Holy Ghost, and it is also true that all who so believe the gospel are the happy subjects of God's eternal

lost, ruined, guilty, and yet *self-vindicating*, and therefore *God-accusing* sinner.

But, just at this point, God began to reveal Himself and His purposes of redeeming love; and herein lay the true basis of man's peace and blessedness. When man has come to the end of himself, God can show what He is; but not until then. The scene must be entirely cleared of man and all his vain pretensions, empty boastings and blasphemous reasonings, ere God can or will reveal Himself. Thus it was when man was hidden behind the trees of the garden that God unfolded His wondrous plan of re-

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counsels; but does all this set aside man's responsibility to believe a plain testimony set before him in God's Word? It most certainly does no such thing. But it does reveal the sad evil of man's heart, which leads him to reject *God's testimony* which is plainly revealed, and to give as a reason for so doing, *God's decree*, which is a profound secret—known only to Himself. However, it will not avail, for we read in 1 Thess. i. 8, 9, that those "who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall be punished with everlasting destruction."

Men are responsible to believe the gospel, and they will be punished for not believing it. They are not responsible to know anything about God's counsels, inasmuch as they are not revealed, and therefore there can be no guilt attached to ignorance concerning them. The apostle could say to the Thessalonians, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." How did he know it? Was it by having access to the page of God's secret and eternal decrees? By no means. How then? "Because [ὅτι] our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power." (1 Thess. i. 4, 5.) This is the way to know the election of any. When the gospel comes with power, it is a plain proof of God's election.

But, I doubt not, the people who draw a plea from the divine counsels for rejecting the divine testimony, only want some flimsy excuse to continue in sin. They really do not want God; and it would be far more honest in them to say so plainly, than to put forward a plea which is not merely flimsy, but positively blasphemous. Such a plea will not avail them much amid the terrors of the day of judgment, now fast approaching.

demption through the instrumentality of the bruised seed of the woman. Here we are taught a valuable principle of truth as to what it is which alone will bring a man peacefully and confidingly into the presence of God.

It has been already remarked that conscience will never effect this. Conscience drove Adam behind the trees of the garden; revelation brought him forth into the presence of God. The consciousness of what he was terrified him; the revelation of what God was tranquilized him. This is truly consolatory for a poor sin-burdened heart. The reality of what I am is met by the reality of what God is; and this is salvation.

There is a point where God and man must meet, whether in grace or judgment, and that point is where both are revealed *as they are*. Happy are they who reach that point in grace! Woe be to them who will have to reach it in judgment! It is with what we are that God deals; and it is as He is that He deals with us. In the cross, I see God descending, in grace, to the lowest depths, not merely of my negative, but my positive condition as a sinner. This gives perfect peace. If God has met me in my actual condition, and Himself provided an adequate remedy, all is eternally settled. But all who do not thus by faith see God in the cross, will have to meet Him by and by in judgment, when He will have to deal, according to what He is, with what they are.

The moment a man is brought to know his real

state, he can find no rest until he has found God in the cross, and then he rests in God Himself. He, blessed be His name, is the rest and hiding-place of the believing soul. This at once puts human works and human righteousness in their proper place. We can say, with truth, that those who rest in such things cannot possibly have arrived at the true knowledge of themselves. It is quite impossible that a divinely-quickened conscience can rest in aught save the perfect sacrifice of the Son of God. All effort to establish one's own righteousness must proceed from ignorance of the righteousness of God. Adam might learn, in the light of the divine testimony about "the seed of the woman," the worthlessness of his fig-leaf apron. The magnitude of that which had to be done, proved the sinner's total inability to do it. Sin had to be put away. Could man do that? Nay, it was by him it had come in. The serpent's head had to be bruised. Could man do that? Nay, he had become the serpent's slave. God's claims had to be met. Could man do that? Nay, he had already trampled them under foot. Death had to be abolished. Could man do that? Nay, he had, by sin, introduced it, and imparted to it its terrible sting.

Thus, in whatever way we view the matter, we see the sinner's complete impotency, and, as a consequence, the presumptuous folly of all who attempt to assist God in the stupendous work of redemption, as all assuredly do who think to be saved in any other way but "by grace, through faith."

However, though Adam might, and, through grace, did, see and feel that he could never accomplish all that had to be done, yet God revealed Himself as about to achieve every jot and tittle thereof by the seed of the woman. In short, we see that He graciously took the entire matter into His own hands.

He made it altogether a question between Himself and the serpent; for although the man and the woman were called upon individually to reap, in various ways, the bitter fruits of their sin, yet it was to the serpent that the Lord God said, "Because thou hast done this." The serpent was the source of the ruin, and the seed of the woman was to be the source of the redemption. Adam heard all this and believed it, and, in the power of that belief, "he called his wife's name the mother of *all living*."

This was a precious fruit of faith in God's revelation. Looking at the matter from nature's point of view, Eve might be called, the mother of all *dying*; but, in the judgment of faith, she was the mother of all *living*. "His mother called him Ben-oni (the son of my sorrow); but his father called him Benjamin (the son of my right hand)."

It was through the sustaining energy of faith that Adam was enabled to endure the terrible results of what he had done. It was God's wondrous mercy to allow him to hear what He said to the serpent, before he was called to listen to what He had to say to himself. Had it not been so, he must have been plunged in despair. It is despair to be called upon to look at myself without being able to look at God

as revealed in the cross for my salvation. There is no child of fallen Adam who could bear to have his eyes opened to the reality of what he is and what he has done, without being plunged in despair, unless he could take refuge in the cross. Hence, in that place to which all who reject Christ must finally be consigned, hope cannot come. There, men's eyes will be opened to the reality of what they are and what they have done, but they will not be able to find relief and refuge in God. What God is, will *then* involve hopeless perdition, as truly as what God is doth *now* involve eternal salvation. The holiness of God will then be eternally against them, as it is now that in which all who believe are called to rejoice. The more I realize the holiness of God now, the more I know my security; but in the case of the lost, that very holiness will be but the ratification of their eternal doom. Solemn—unspeakably solemn—reflection!

We shall now briefly glance at the truth presented to us in God's providing coats for Adam and Eve. "Unto Adam, also, and to his wife, did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them." We have here, in figure, the great doctrine of divine righteousness set forth. The robe which God provided was an effectual covering, because He provided it; just as the apron was an ineffectual covering, because man had provided it. Moreover, God's coat was founded upon blood-shedding; Adam's apron was not. So also now, God's righteousness is set forth in the cross; man's righteousness is set

forth in the works—the sin-stained works—of his own hands. When Adam stood clothed in the coat of skin he could not say he was naked, nor had he any occasion to hide himself. The sinner may feel perfectly at rest when, by faith, he knows that God has clothed him; but to feel at rest till then, can only be the result of presumption or ignorance. To know that the dress I wear, and in which I appear before God, is of His own providing, must set my heart at perfect rest. There can be no true, permanent rest in aught else.

The closing verses of this chapter are full of instruction. Fallen man, in his fallen state, must not be allowed to eat of the fruit of the tree of life, for that would entail upon him endless wretchedness in this world. To take of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever in our present condition, would be unmingled misery. The tree of life can only be tasted in resurrection. To live forever in a frail tabernacle, in a body of sin and death, would be intolerable. Wherefore, the Lord God "drove out the man." He drove him out into a world which everywhere exhibited the lamentable results of his fall. The cherubim and the flaming sword, too, forbid fallen man to pluck the fruit of the tree of life; while God's revelation pointed him to the death and resurrection of the seed of the woman, as that wherein life was to be found beyond the power of death.

Thus Adam was a happier and a safer man outside the bounds of paradise than he had been within,

for this reason: that within, his life depended upon himself; whereas outside, it depended upon another, even a promised Christ. And as he looked up and beheld "the cherubim and the flaming sword," he could bless the hand that had set them there, "to keep the way of the tree of life," inasmuch as the same hand had opened a better, a safer and a happier way to that tree. If the cherubim and flaming sword stopped up the way to paradise, the Lord Jesus Christ has opened "a new and living way" into the holiest of all. "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." (Compare John xiv. 6; Heb. x. 20.) In the knowledge of this, the believer now moves onward through a world which is under the curse—where the traces of sin are visible on all hands. He has found his way, by faith, to the bosom of the Father; and while he can secretly repose there, he is cheered by the blessed assurance that the One who has conducted him thither is gone to prepare a place in the many mansions of the Father's house, and that He will soon come again and receive him unto Himself, amid the glory of the Father's kingdom. Thus, in the bosom, the house and the kingdom of the Father, the believer finds his present portion, his future home and reward.

CHAPTERS IV & V

AS each section of the Book of Genesis opens before us, we are furnished with fresh evidence of the fact that we are traveling over, what a recent writer has well termed, "the seed-plot of the whole Bible"; and not only so, but the seed-plot of man's entire history.

Thus, in the fourth chapter, we have, in the persons of Cain and Abel, the first examples of a religious man of the world and of a genuine man of faith. Born, as they were, outside of Eden, and being the sons of fallen Adam, they could have nothing, naturally, to distinguish them one from the other. They were both sinners,—both had a fallen nature,—neither was innocent. It is well to be clear in reference to this, in order that the reality of divine grace and the integrity of faith may be fully and distinctly seen. If the distinction between Cain and Abel were founded in nature, then it follows, as an inevitable conclusion, that they were not the partakers of the fallen nature of their father, nor the participators in the circumstances of his fall, and hence there could be no room for the display of grace and the exercise of faith.

Some would teach us that every man is born with qualities and capacities which, if rightly used, will enable him to work his way back to God. This is a plain denial of the fact so clearly set forth in the

history now before us. Cain and Abel were born, not inside, but outside of paradise,—they were the sons, not of innocent, but of fallen Adam. They came into the world as the partakers of the nature of their father; and it mattered not in what phase that nature might display itself, it was nature still—fallen, ruined, irremediable nature. "That which is born of the flesh is [not merely fleshly, but] flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is [not merely spiritual, but] spirit." (John iii.)

If ever there was a fair opportunity for the distinctive qualities, capacities, resources and tendencies of nature to manifest themselves, the lifetime of Cain and Abel furnished it. If there were aught in nature whereby it could recover its lost innocence and establish itself again within the bounds of Eden, this was the moment for its display. But there was nothing of the kind. They were both *lost*. They were "flesh." They were not innocent. Adam lost his innocence and never regained it. He can only be looked at as the fallen head of a fallen race, who, by his "disobedience," were made "sinners." (Rom. v. 19.) He became, so far as he was personally concerned, the corrupt source from whence have emanated the corrupt streams of ruined and guilty humanity—the dead trunk from which have shot forth the branches of a dead humanity, morally and spiritually dead.

True, as we have already remarked, he himself was made a subject of grace, and the possessor and exhibiter of a lively faith in a promised Saviour;

but this was not anything natural, but something entirely divine. And, inasmuch as it was not natural, neither was it within the range of nature's capacity to communicate it. It was not, by any means, hereditary. Adam could not bequeath nor impart his faith to Cain or Abel. His possession thereof was simply the fruit of love divine. It was implanted in his soul by divine power, and he had not divine power to communicate it to another. Whatever was natural, Adam could, in the way of nature, communicate; but nothing more. And seeing that he, as a father, was in a condition of ruin, his son could only be in the same. As is the begetter, so are they also that are begotten of him. They must, of necessity, partake of the nature of him from whom they have sprung,—"As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy." (1 Cor. xv. 48.)

Nothing can be more important, in its way, than a correct understanding of the doctrine of federal headship. If my reader will turn, for a moment, to Rom. v. 12–21. he will find that the inspired apostle looks at the whole human race as comprehended under two heads. I do not attempt to dwell on the passage, but merely refer to it in connection with the subject in hand. The fifteenth chapter of first Corinthians will also furnish instruction of a similar character. In the first man, we have sin, disobedience and death: in the Second Man, we have righteousness, obedience and life. As we derive a nature from the former, so do we also from the latter. No doubt each nature will display, in each specific case

its own peculiar energies; it will manifest, in each individual possessor thereof, its own peculiar powers. Still there is the absolute possession of a real, abstract, positive nature.

Now, as the mode in which we derive a nature from the first man is by birth, so the mode in which we derive a nature from the Second Man is by *new* birth. Being born, we partake of the nature of the former; being "born *again*," we partake of the nature of the latter. A newly born infant, though entirely incapable of performing the act which reduced Adam to the condition of a fallen being, is, nevertheless, a partaker of his nature; and so, also, a newly born child of God—a newly regenerated soul, though having nothing whatever to do with the working out of the perfect obedience of "the man Christ Jesus," is, nevertheless, a partaker of His nature. True it is, that attached to the former nature there is sin; and attached to the latter, there is righteousness,—man's sin, in the former case; God's righteousness in the latter: yet, all the while, there is the actual, *bona fide* participation of a real nature, let the adjuncts be what they may. The child of Adam partakes of the human nature and its adjuncts; the child of God partakes of the divine nature and its adjuncts. The former nature is according to "the will of man" (John i.), the latter is according to "the will of God,"—as James, by the Holy Ghost, teaches us, "of His own will begat He us by the Word of Truth." (James i. 18.)

From all that has been said, it follows, that Abel

was not distinguished from his brother Cain by anything natural. The distinction between them was not grounded upon aught in their nature or circumstances, for, as to these, "there was no difference." What, therefore, made the vast difference? The answer is as simple as the gospel of the grace of God can make it. The difference was not in themselves, in their nature or their circumstances; it lay *entirely* in their *sacrifices*. This makes the matter most simple for any truly convicted sinner—for any one who truly feels that he not only partakes of a fallen nature, but is himself, also, a sinner. The history of Abel opens, to such an one, the only true ground of his approach to, his standing before, and his relationship with, God. It teaches him, distinctly, that he cannot come to God on the ground of anything in, of, or pertaining to, nature; and he must seek, *outside himself*, and in the person and work of another, the true and everlasting basis of his connection with the holy, the just and only true God. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews sets the whole subject before us in the most distinct and comprehensive way,—"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice [πλειονα θυσιαν] than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God bearing witness [μαρτυρουντος] to his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh." Here we are taught that it was in nowise a question as to the men, but only as to their "sacrifice"—it was not a question as to the offerer, but as to his offering. Here lay the grand distinction between

Cain and Abel. My reader cannot be too simple in his apprehension of this point, for therein lies involved the truth as to any sinner's standing before God.

And now let us inquire what the offerings were. "And, in process of time, it came to pass that Cain brought, of the fruit of the ground, an offering unto Jehovah. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect." (Gen. iv. 3–5.) This passage sets the difference clearly before us. Cain offered to Jehovah the fruit of a cursed earth, and that, moreover, without any blood to remove the curse. He presented "an unbloody sacrifice," simply because he had no faith. Had he possessed that divine principle, it would have taught him, even at this early moment, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission." (Heb. ix.) This is a great cardinal truth. The penalty of sin is death. Cain was a sinner, and, as such, death stood between him and Jehovah; but, in his offering, there was no recognition whatever of this fact,—there was no presentation of a sacrificed life, to meet the claims of divine holiness, or to answer to his own true condition as a sinner. He treated Jehovah as though He were altogether such an one as himself, who could accept the sin-stained fruit of a cursed earth.

All this, and much more, lay involved in Cain's "unbloody sacrifice." He displayed entire igno-

rance in reference to divine requirements, in reference to his own character and condition as a lost and guilty sinner, and in reference to the true state of that ground, the fruit of which he presumed to offer. No doubt reason might say, What more acceptable offering could a man present than that which he had produced by the labor of his hands and the sweat of his brow? Reason, and even man's religious mind, may think thus, but God thinks quite differently; and faith is always sure to agree with God's thoughts. God teaches, and faith believes, that there must be a sacrificed life, else there can be no approach to God.

Thus, when we look at the ministry of the Lord Jesus, we see, at once, that, had He not died upon the cross, all His services would have proved utterly unavailing as regards the establishment of our relationship with God. True, "He went about doing good" all His life; but it was His death that rent the vail. (Matt. xxvii. 51.) Naught but His death could have done so. Had He continued to the present moment "going about doing good," the vail would have remained entire, to bar the worshiper's approach into "the holiest of all." Hence we can see the false ground on which Cain stood as an offerer and a worshiper. An unpardoned sinner coming into the presence of Jehovah to present "an unbloody sacrifice," could only be regarded as guilty of the highest degree of presumption. True, he had toiled to produce his offering; but what of that? Could a sinner's toil remove the curse and

stain of sin? could it satisfy the claims of an infinitely holy God? could it furnish a proper ground of acceptance for a sinner? could it set aside the penalty which was due to sin? could it rob death of its sting, or the grave of its victory?—could it do any or all of these things? Impossible. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." Cain's "unbloody sacrifice," like every other unbloody sacrifice, was not only worthless, but actually abominable, in the divine estimation. It not only demonstrated his entire ignorance of his own condition, but also of the divine character. "God is not worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything"; and yet Cain thought He could be thus approached,—and every mere religionist thinks the same. Cain has had many millions of followers, from age to age. Cain-worship has abounded all over the world. It is the worship of every unconverted soul, and is maintained by every false system of religion under the sun.

Man would fain make God a receiver instead of a giver; but this cannot be; for "it is more blessed to give than to receive"; and assuredly God must have the more blessed place. "Without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better." "Who hath *first* given to Him?" God can accept the smallest gift from a heart which has learnt the deep truth contained in those words—"Of Thine own have we given Thee"; but the moment a man presumes to take the place of the "first" giver, God's reply is, "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee";

for "He is not worshiped with men's hands, as though He *needed anything*, seeing He *giveth* to *all* life and breath and *all* things." The great Giver of "all things" cannot possibly "need anything." Praise is all that we can offer to God; but this can only be offered in the full and clear intelligence that our sins are all put away; and this, again, can only be known by faith in the virtue of an accomplished atonement.

My reader may pause here, and read prayerfully the following Scriptures; namely, Psalm 1; Isaiah i. 11–18, and Acts xvii. 22–34, in all of which he will find distinctly laid down the truth as to man's true position before God, as also the proper ground of worship.

Let us now consider Abel's sacrifice. "And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof." In other words, he entered, by faith, into the glorious truth, that God could be approached by sacrifice; that there was such a thing as a sinner's placing the death of another between himself and the consequence of his sin; that the claims of God's nature and the attributes of His character could be met by the blood of a spotless victim—a victim offered to meet God's demands and the sinner's deep necessities. This is, in short, the doctrine of the cross, in which alone the conscience of a sinner can find repose, because therein God is fully glorified.

Every divinely convicted sinner must feel that death and judgment are before him, as "the due

reward of his deeds"; nor can he, by aught that he can accomplish, alter that destiny. He may toil and labor; he may, by the sweat of his brow, produce an offering; he may make vows and resolutions; he may alter his way of life; he may reform his outward character; he may be temperate, moral, upright, and, in the human acceptation of the word, religious; he may, though entirely destitute of faith, read, pray, and hear sermons. In short, he may do anything or everything which lies within the range of human competency; but, notwithstanding all, "death" and "judgment" are before him. He has not been able to disperse those two heavy clouds which have gathered upon the horizon. There they stand; and, so far from being able to remove them by all his doings, he can only live in the gloomy anticipation of the moment when they shall burst upon his guilty head. It is impossible for a sinner, by his own works, to place himself in life and triumph at the other side of "death" and "judgment"—yea, his very works are only performed for the purpose of preparing him, if possible, for those dreaded realities.

Here, however, is exactly where the cross comes in. In that cross, the convicted sinner can behold a divine provision for all his guilt and all his need. There, too, he can see death and judgment entirely removed from the scene, and life and glory set in their stead. Christ has cleared the prospect of death and judgment, so far as the true believer is concerned, and filled it with life, righteousness and

glory. "He hath abolished death, and brought life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel." (2 Tim. i. 10.) He has glorified God in the putting away of that which would have separated us forever from His holy and blissful presence. "He has put away sin," and hence it is gone. (Heb. ix. 26.) All this is, in type, set forth in Abel's "more excellent sacrifice." There was no attempt, on Abel's part, to set aside the truth as to his own condition and proper place as a guilty sinner—no attempt to turn aside the edge of the flaming sword, and force his way back to the tree of life—no presumptuous offering of an "unbloody sacrifice"—no presentation of the fruit of a cursed earth to Jehovah—he took the real ground of a sinner, and, as such, set the death of a victim between him and his sins, and between his sins and the holiness of a sin-hating God. This was most simple. Abel deserved death and judgment, but he found a substitute.

Thus is it with every poor, helpless, self-condemned, conscience-smitten sinner. Christ is his substitute, his ransom, his most excellent sacrifice, his ALL. Such an one will feel, like Abel, that the fruit of the ground could never avail for him; that were he to present to God the fairest fruits of earth, he would still have a sin-stained conscience, inasmuch as "without shedding of blood is no remission." The richest fruits and the most fragrant flowers, in the greatest profusion, could not remove a single stain from the conscience. Nothing but the perfect sacrifice of the Son of God can give ease to

the heart and conscience. All who by faith lay hold of that divine reality, will enjoy a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. It is faith which puts the soul in present possession of this peace. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. v. 1.) "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain."

It is not a question of feeling, as so many would make it: it is entirely a question of faith in an accomplished fact—faith wrought in the soul of a sinner, by the power of the Holy Ghost. This faith is something quite different from a mere feeling of the heart, or an assent of the intellect. Feeling is not faith: intellectual assent is not faith. Some would make faith to be the mere assent of the intellect to a certain proposition. This is fearfully false. It makes the question of faith human, whereas it is really divine,—it reduces it to the level of man, whereas it really comes from God. Faith is not a thing of to-day or to-morrow. It is an imperishable principle, emanating from an eternal source, even God Himself; it lays hold of God's truth, and sets the soul in God's presence.

Mere feeling and sentimentality can never rise above the source from whence they emanate, and that source is self; but faith has to do with God and His eternal Word, and is a living link, connecting the heart that possesses it with God who gives it. Human feelings, however intense; human sentiments, however refined, could not connect the soul

with God. They are neither divine nor eternal, but are human and evanescent. They are like Jonah's gourd, which sprang up in a night and perished in a night. Not so faith. That precious principle partakes of all the value, all the power, and all the reality of the source from whence it emanates, and the object with which it has to do. It justifies the soul (Rom. v. 1.); it purifies the heart (Acts xv. 9.); it works by love (Gal. v. 6.); it overcomes the world (1 John v. 4.). Feeling and sentiment never could accomplish such results; they belong to nature and to earth, faith belongs to God and to heaven; they are occupied with self, faith is occupied with Christ; they look inward and downward, faith looks outward and upward; they leave the soul in darkness and doubt, faith leads it into light and peace; they have to do with one's own fluctuating condition, faith has to do with God's immutable truth and Christ's eternally enduring sacrifice.

No doubt faith will produce feelings and sentiments—spiritual feelings and truthful sentiments—but the fruits of faith must never be confounded with faith itself. I am not justified by feelings, nor yet by faith *and* feelings, but simply by faith. And why? Because faith believes God when He speaks—it takes Him at His word; it apprehends Him as He has revealed Himself in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is life, righteousness and peace. To apprehend God as He is, is the sum of all present and eternal blessedness. When the soul finds out God, it has found out all it can possi

bly need, here or hereafter; but He can only be known by His own revelation, and by the faith which He Himself imparts, and which, moreover, always seeks divine revelation as its proper object.

Thus, then, we can, in some measure, enter into the meaning and power of the statement, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Cain had no faith, and therefore he offered an unbloody sacrifice: Abel had faith, and therefore he offered both "blood" and "fat," which, in type, set forth the presentation of the life, and also the inherent excellency of the Person of Christ. "The blood" set forth the former; "the fat" shadowed forth the latter. Both blood and fat were forbidden to be eaten, under the Mosaic economy. The blood is the life; and man, under law, had no title to life. But, in the sixth of John, we are taught, that unless we eat blood, we have no life in us. Christ is *the* life. There is not a spark of life outside of Him. All out of Christ is death. "In Him was life," and in none else.

Now, He gave up His life on the cross; and to that life sin was, by imputation, attached, when the blessed One was nailed to the cursed tree. Hence, in giving up His life, He gave up also the sin attached thereto, so that it is effectually put away, having been left in His grave, from which He rose triumphant, in the power of a new life, to which righteousness as distinctly attaches itself as did sin to that life which He gave up on the cross. This will help us to an understanding of an expression

used by our blessed Lord after His resurrection,—"A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." He did not say, flesh and blood; because, in resurrection, He had not assumed into His sacred person the blood which He had shed out upon the cross as an atonement for sin. "The life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar, to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood which maketh an atonement for the soul." (Lev. xvii. 11.) Close attention to this point will have the effect of deepening in our souls the sense of the completeness of the putting away of sin by the death of Christ; and we know that whatever tends to deepen our sense of that glorious reality, must necessarily tend to the fuller establishment of our peace, and to the more effectual promotion of the glory of Christ, as connected with our testimony and service.

We have already referred to a point of much interest and value, in the history of Cain and Abel, and that is, the entire identification of each with the offering which he presented. My reader cannot possibly bestow too much attention upon this. The question, in each case, was not as to the person of the offerer, but entirely as to the character of his offering. Hence, of Abel we read that "God testified of his *gifts*." He did not bear witness to Abel, but to Abel's sacrifice; and this fixes, distinctly, the proper ground of a believer's peace and acceptance before God.

There is a constant tendency in the heart to

ground our peace and acceptance upon something in or about ourselves, even though we admit that that something is wrought by the Holy Ghost. Hence arises the constant looking *in*, when the Holy Ghost would ever have us looking *out*. The question for every believer is not, What am I? but, What is Christ? Having come to God "in the name of Jesus," he is wholly identified with Him, and accepted in His name, and, moreover, can no more be rejected than the One in whose name he has come. Before ever a question can be raised as to the feeblest believer, it must be raised as to Christ Himself. But this latter is clearly impossible, and thus the security of the believer is established upon a foundation which nothing can possibly move. Being in himself a poor worthless sinner, he has come in the name of Christ, he is identified with Christ, accepted in and as Christ, bound up in the same bundle of life with Christ. God testifies not of him, but of his gift, and his gift is Christ. All this is most tranquilizing and consolatory. It is our happy privilege to be able, in the confidence of faith, to refer every objection, and every objector, to Christ and His finished atonement. All our springs are in Him: in Him we boast all the day long. Our confidence is not in ourselves, but in Him who hath wrought everything for us. We hang on His name, trust in His work, gaze on His Person, and wait for His coming.

But the carnal mind at once displays its enmity against all this truth which so gladdens and satisfies

the heart of a believer. Thus it was with Cain,—"He was very wroth, and his countenance fell." That which filled Abel with peace, filled Cain with wrath. Cain, in unbelief, despised the only way in which a sinner could come to God. He refused to offer blood, without which there can be no remission; and then, because *he* was not received, *in his sins*, and because Abel was accepted, *in his gift*, "he was wroth, and his countenance fell." And yet, how else could it be? He should either be received with his sins or without them; but God could not receive Him with them, and he would not bring the blood which alone maketh atonement, and therefore he was rejected, and, being rejected, he manifests, in his ways, the fruits of corrupt religion. He persecutes and murders the true witness—the accepted, justified man—the man of faith; and, in so doing, he stands as the model and forerunner of all false religionists, in every age. At all times, and in all places, men have shown themselves more ready to persecute on religious grounds than on any other. This is Cain-like. Justification—full, perfect, unqualified justification, by faith only—makes God everything, and man nothing; and man does not like this—it causes his countenance to fall, and draws out his anger. Not that he can give any reason for his anger; for it is not, as we have seen, a question of man at all, but only of the ground on which he appears before God. Had Abel been accepted on the ground of aught in himself, then, indeed, Cain's wrath, and his fallen countenance,

would have had some just foundation; but, inasmuch as he was accepted exclusively on the ground of his offering, and inasmuch as it was not to him, but to his gift, that Jehovah bore testimony, his wrath was entirely without any proper basis. This is brought out in Jehovah's word to Cain,—"If thou doest well, (or, as the LXX reads it, "if thou offer correctly [ορθως προσενεγκης],") shalt thou not be accepted?" The well-doing had reference to the offering. Abel did well by hiding himself behind an acceptable sacrifice: Cain did badly by bringing an offering without blood; and all his after-conduct was but the legitimate result of his false worship.

"And Cain talked with his brother Abel: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him." Thus has it ever been,—the Cains have persecuted and murdered the Abels. At all times, man and his religion are the same, faith and its religion are the same; and wherever they have met there has been conflict.

However, it is well to see that Cain's act of murder was the true consequence—the proper fruit—of his false worship. His foundation was bad, and the superstructure erected thereon was also bad. Nor did he stop at the act of murder; but having heard the judgment of God thereon, despairing of forgiveness through ignorance of God, he went forth from His blessed presence and built a city, and had in his family the cultivators of the useful and ornamental sciences—agriculturists, musicians, and workers in

metals. Through ignorance of the divine character, he pronounced his sin too great to be pardoned.* It was not that he really knew his sin, but that he knew not God. He fully exhibited the terrible fruit of the fall in the very thought of God to which he gave utterance. He did not want pardon, because he did not want God. He had no true sense of his own condition, no aspirations after God, no intelligence as to the ground of a sinner's approach to God. He was radically corrupt—fundamentally wrong; and all he wanted was to get out of the presence of God, and lose himself in the world and its pursuits. He thought he could live very well without God, and he therefore set about decorating the world as well as he could, for the purpose of making it a respectable place, and himself a respectable man therein, though in God's view it was under the curse, and he was a fugitive and a vagabond.

Such was "*the way of Cain*," in which way millions are, at this moment, rushing on. Such persons are not, by any means, divested of the religious element in their character. They would like to offer something to God—to do something for Him. They deem it right to present to Him the results of their own toil. They are ignorant of themselves, ignorant of God; but with all this there is the diligent effort to improve the world, to make life agreeable in various ways, to deck the scene with the fairest colors.

*The word used by Cain is מְנֻשָּׂא which occurs in Psalm xxxii. 1,—"whose transgression is *forgiven*." The LXX renders it by αφεθηναι—"to be remitted."

God's remedy to *cleanse* is rejected, and man's effort to *improve* is put in its place. This is "the way of Cain." (Jude 11.)

And, my reader, you have only to look around you to see how this "way" prevails at the present moment. Though the world is stained with the blood of "a greater than" Abel, even with the blood of Christ, yet see what an agreeable place man seeks to make of it! As in Cain's day, the grateful sounds of "the harp and organ," no doubt, completely drowned, to man's ear, the cry of Abel's blood; so now, man's ear is filled with other sounds than those which issue from Calvary, and his eye filled with other objects than a crucified Christ. The resources of his genius, too, are put forth to render this world a hot-house, in which are produced, in their rarest form, all the fruits for which nature so eagerly longs. And not merely are the real wants of man, as a creature, supplied, but the inventive genius of the human mind has been set to work for the purpose of devising things which, the moment the eye sees, the heart desires, and not only desires, but imagines that life would be intolerable without them. Thus, for instance, some years ago, people were content to devote three or four days to the accomplishing of a journey of one hundred miles; but now they can accomplish it in three or four hours; and not only so, but they will complain sadly if they happen to be five or ten minutes late. In fact, man must be saved the trouble of living. He must travel without fatigue, he must hear news

without having to exercise patience for it. He will lay iron rails across the earth, and electric wires beneath the sea, as if to anticipate, in his own way, that bright and blissful age, when "there will be no more sea."*

In addition to all this, there is abundance of religion, so called; but, alas! charity itself is compelled to harbor the apprehension that very much of what passes for religion is but a screw in the vast machine which has been constructed for man's convenience and man's exaltation. Man would not be without religion: it would not be respectable; and therefore he is content to devote one-seventh of his time to religion, or, as he thinks and professes, to his eternal interests, and then he has six-sevenths to devote to his temporal interests; but whether he works for time or eternity, it is for *himself*, in reality. Such is "the way of Cain." Let my reader ponder it well. Let him see where this way begins, whither it tends, and where it terminates.

How different the way of the man of faith! Abel felt and owned the curse; he saw the stain of sin, and, in the holy energy of faith, offered that which met it, and met it thoroughly—met it divinely. He sought and found a refuge in God Himself; and instead of building a city on the earth, he found but a grave in its bosom. The earth, which on its sur-

*True, the Lord is using all those things for the furtherance of His own gracious ends; and the Lord's servant can freely use them also; but this does not hinder our seeing the spirit which originates and characterizes them.

face displayed the genius and energy of Cain and his family, was stained underneath with the blood of a righteous man. Let the man of the world remember this; let the man of God remember it; let the worldly-minded Christian remember it. The earth which we tread upon is stained by the blood of the Son of God. The very blood which justifies the Church condemns the world. The dark shadow of the cross of Jesus may be seen by the eye of faith, looming over all the glitter and glare of this evanescent world. "The fashion of this world passeth away." It will soon all be over, so far as the present scene is concerned. "The way of Cain" will be followed by "the error of Balaam," in its consummated form; and then will come "the gainsaying of Core"; and what then? "The pit" will open its mouth to receive the wicked, and close it again to shut them up in "blackness of darkness forever." (Jude 13.)

In full confirmation of the foregoing lines, we may run the eye over the contents of chapter v, and find therein the humiliating record of man's weakness, and subjection to the rule of death. He might live for hundreds of years, and "beget sons and daughters, but at last it must be recorded that "*he died.*" "Death reigned from Adam to Moses." And again, "It is appointed unto men once to die." Man cannot get over this. He cannot, by steam, or electricity, or anything else within the range of his genius, disarm death of its terrible sting. He cannot, by his energy, set aside the sentence of *death*,

although he may produce the comforts and luxuries of *life*.

But whence came this strange and dreaded thing —death? St. Paul gives us the answer,—"By one man sin entered into the world, and *death by sin*." (Rom. v. 12.) Here we have the origin of death. It came by sin. Sin snapped asunder the link which bound the creature to the living God; and, that being done, he was handed over to the dominion of death, which dominion he had no power whatever to shake off. And this, be it observed, is one of the many proofs of the fact of man's total inability to meet God. There can be no fellowship between God and man, save in the power of life; but man is under the power of death; hence, on natural grounds, there can be no fellowship. Life can have no fellowship with death, no more than light with darkness, or holiness with sin. Man must meet God on an entirely new ground, and on a new principle, even faith; and this faith enables him to recognize his own position as "sold under sin," and therefore subject to death; while, at the same time, it enables him to apprehend God's character, as the dispenser of a new life—life beyond the power of death—a life which can never be touched by the enemy, nor forfeited by us.

This it is which marks the security of the believer's life. Christ is his life—a risen, glorified Christ —a Christ victorious over everything that could be against us. Adam's life was founded upon his own obedience; and, therefore, when he disobeyed, life

was forfeited. But Christ, having life in Himself, came down into this world, and fully met all the circumstances of man's sin, in every possible form; and, by submitting to death, destroyed him who had the power thereof, and, in resurrection, becomes the life and righteousness of all who believe in His most excellent name.

Now, it is impossible that Satan can touch this life, either in its source, its channel, its power, its sphere, or its duration. God is its source; a risen Christ, its channel; the Holy Ghost, its power; heaven, its sphere; and eternity, its duration. Hence, therefore, as might be expected, to one possessing this wondrous life, the whole scene is changed; and while, in one sense, it must be said, "in the midst of life we are in death," yet, in another sense, it can be said, "in the midst of death we are in life." There is no death in the sphere into which a risen Christ introduces His people. How could there be? Has not He abolished it? It cannot be an abolished and an existing thing at the same time and to the same people; but God's Word tells us it is abolished. Christ emptied the scene of death, and filled it with life; and therefore it is not death, but glory that lies before the believer. Death is behind him, and behind him forever. As to the future, it is all glory—cloudless glory. True, it may be his lot to "fall asleep"—to "sleep in Jesus"—but that is not death, but "life in earnest." The mere matter of departing to be with Christ cannot alter the specific hope of the believer. which is, to

meet Christ in the air, to be with Him and like Him forever.

Of this we have a very beautiful exemplification in Enoch, who forms the only exception to the rule of chapter v. The rule is, "he died"; the exception is, "he should not see death." "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." (Heb. xi. 5.) Enoch was "the seventh from Adam"; and it is deeply interesting to find that death was not suffered to triumph over "the seventh"; but that, in his case, God interfered, and made him a trophy of His own glorious victory over all the power of death. The heart rejoices, after reading, six times, the sad record, "he died," to find that the seventh did not die; and when we ask, How was this? the answer is, "By faith." Enoch lived in the faith of his translation, and walked with God three hundred years. This separated him, practically, from all around. To walk with God must necessarily put one outside the sphere of this world's thoughts. Enoch realized this; for, in his day, the spirit of the world was manifested; and then, too, as now, it was opposed to all that was of God. The man of faith felt he had naught to do with the world, save to be a patient witness therein of the grace of God, and of coming judgment. The sons of Cain might spend their energies in the vain attempt to improve a cursed world, but Enoch found a better world, and lived in

the power of it.* His faith was not given him to improve the world, but to walk with God.

And, oh! how much is involved in these three words—"walked with God"! What separation and self-denial! what holiness and moral purity! what grace and gentleness! what humility and tenderness! and yet what zeal and energy! What patience and long-suffering! and yet what faithfulness and uncompromising decision! To walk with God comprehends everything within the range of the divine life, whether active or passive. It involves the knowledge of God's character as He has revealed it. It involves, too, the intelligence of the relationship in which we stand to Him. It is not a mere living by rules and regulations; nor laying down plans of action; nor in resolutions to go hither and thither, to do this or that. To walk with God is far more than any or all of these things. Moreover, it will sometimes carry us right athwart the thoughts of men, and even of our brethren, if they are not themselves walking with God. It may sometimes bring against us the charge of doing too much; at other times, of doing too little; but the faith that enables one to "walk with God," enables him also to attach the proper value to the thoughts of man.

Thus we have, in Abel and Enoch, most valuable instruction as to the sacrifice on which faith rests, and as to the prospect which hope now anticipates;

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*It is very evident that Enoch knew nothing whatever about the mode of "making the best of both worlds." To him there was but one world. Thus it should be with us.

while, at the same time, the "walk with God" takes in all the details of actual life which lie between those two points. "The Lord will give grace and glory"; and between the grace that has been, and the glory that is to be, revealed, there is the happy assurance that "no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." (Psalm lxxxiv. 11.)

It has been remarked that "the cross and the coming of the Lord form the termini of the Church's existence," and these termini are prefigured in the sacrifice of Abel and the translation of Enoch. The Church knows her entire justification through the death and resurrection of Christ, and she waits for the day when He shall come and receive her to Himself. She, "through the Spirit, waits for the hope of righteousness by faith." (Gal. v. 5.) She does not wait for righteousness, inasmuch as she, by grace, has that already; but she waits for the hope which properly belongs to the condition into which she has been introduced.

My reader should seek to be clear as to this. Some expositors of prophetic truth, from not seeing the Church's specific place, portion and hope, have made sad mistakes. They have, in effect, cast so many dark clouds and thick mists around "the bright and morning star," which is the proper hope of the Church, that many saints, at the present moment, seem unable to rise above the hope of the God-fearing remnant of Israel, which is, to see "the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings." (Mal. iv.) Nor is this all. Very many

have been deprived of the moral power of the hope of Christ's appearing, by being taught to look for various events and circumstances previous to the moment of His manifestation to the Church. The restoration of the Jews, the development of Nebuchadnezzar's image, the revelation of the man of sin,—all these things, it is maintained, must take place ere Christ comes. That this is not true, might be proved from numerous passages of New Testament scripture, were this the fitting place to adduce them.

The Church, like Enoch, will be taken away from the evil around and the evil to come. Enoch was not left to see the world's evil rise to a head, and the judgment of God poured forth upon it. He saw not "the fountains of the great deep broken up," nor "the windows of heaven opened." He was taken away before any of these things occurred; and he stands before the eye of faith as a beautiful figure of those "who shall not all sleep, but shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.) Translation, not death, was the hope of Enoch; and as to the Church's hope, it is thus briefly expressed by the apostle: "To wait for His Son from heaven." (1 Thess. 1. 10.) This, the simplest and most unlettered Christian can understand and enjoy. Its power, too, he can, in some measure, experience and manifest. He may not be able to study prophecy very deeply, but he can, blessed be God, taste the blessedness, the reality, the comfort, the power, the elevating

and separating virtue, of that celestial hope which properly belongs to him as a member of that heavenly body—the Church; which hope is not merely to see "the Sun of Righteousness," how blessed soever that may be in its place, but to see "the bright and morning star." (Rev. ii. 28.) And as, in the natural world, the morning star is seen, by those who watch for it, before the sun rises, so Christ, as the morning star, will be seen by the Church before the remnant of Israel can behold the beams of the Sun.

CHAPTERS VI—IX

WE have now arrived at a deeply-important and strongly-marked division of our book. Enoch has passed off the scene. His walk, as a stranger on earth, has terminated in his translation to heaven. He was taken away before human evil had risen to a head, and, therefore, before the divine judgment had been poured out. How little influence his course and translation had upon the world, is manifest from the first two verses of chapter vi. "And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose."

The mingling of that which is of God with that which is of man, is a special form of evil, and a very effectual engine, in Satan's hand, for marring the testimony of Christ on the earth. This mingling may frequently wear the appearance of something very desirable; it may often look like a wider promulgation of that which is of God—a fuller and a more vigorous outgoing of a divine influence—a something to be rejoiced in rather than to be deplored: but our judgment as to this will depend entirely upon the point of view from which we contemplate it. If we look at it in the light of God's presence, we cannot possibly imagine that an advantage is gained when the people of God mingle themselves with the children of this world, or when the truth of God is corrupted by human admixture. Such is not the divine method of promulgating truth, or of advancing the interests of those who ought to occupy the place of witnesses for Him on the earth. Separation from all evil is God's principle; and this principle can never be infringed without serious damage to the truth.

In the narrative now before us, we see that the union of the sons of God with the daughters of men led to the most disastrous consequences. True, the fruit of that union seemed exceedingly fair, in man's judgment, as we read, "The same became mighty men, which were of old, men of renown"; yet God's judgment was quite different. He seeth not as man seeth. His thoughts are not as ours. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the

earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Such was man's condition before God—"evil *only*"—"evil continually." So much for the mingling of the holy with the profane. Thus it must ever be. If the holy seed will not maintain its purity, all must be forfeited, as regards testimony on the earth. Satan's first effort was, to frustrate God's purpose, by putting the holy seed to death; and when that failed, he sought to gain his end by corrupting it.

Now, it is of the deepest moment that my reader should clearly understand the aim, the character, and the result of this union between "the sons of God" and "the daughters of men." There is great danger, at the present day, of compromising truth for the sake of union. This should be carefully guarded against. There can be no true union attained at the expense of truth. The true Christian's motto should ever be, "Maintain truth at all cost; if union can be promoted in this way, so much the better, but maintain the truth." The principle of expediency, on the contrary, may be thus enunciated: "Promote union at all cost; if truth can be maintained as well, so much the better, but promote union." This latter principle can only be carried out at the expense of all that is divine in the way of testimony.* There can, evidently, be

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* We should ever bear in mind, that "the wisdom which is from above is *first pure*, then peaceable." (James iii. 17.) The wisdom which is from beneath would put "peaceable" first, and therefore it can never be pure.

no true testimony where truth is forfeited; and hence, in the case of the antidiluvian world, we see that the unhallowed union between the holy and the profane—between that which was divine and that which was human, only had the effect of bringing the evil to a head, and then God's judgment was poured out.

"The Lord said, 'I will destroy man.'" Nothing less would do. There must be the entire destruction of that which had corrupted God's way on the earth. "The mighty men, and men of renown," must all be swept away, without distinction. "All flesh" must be set aside, as utterly unfit for God. "The end of *all* flesh is come before Me." It was not merely the end of *some* flesh; no, it was all corrupt in the sight of Jehovah—all irrecoverably bad. It had been tried, and found wanting; and the Lord announces His remedy to Noah in these words,—"Make thee an ark of gopher wood."

Thus was Noah put in possession of God's thoughts about the scene around him. The effect of the word of God was, to lay bare the roots of all that which man's eye might rest upon with complacency and pride. The human heart might swell with pride, and the bosom heave with emotion, as the eye ran down along the brilliant ranks of men of art, men of skill, "men of might," and "men of renown." The sound of the harp and the organ might send a thrill through the whole soul, while, at the same time, the ground was cultivated, and man's necessities were provided for in such a way as to contradict

every thought in reference to approaching judgment. But, oh! those solemn words, "*I will destroy*"! What a heavy gloom they would necessarily cast over the glittering scene! Could not man's genius invent some way of escape? Could not "the mighty man deliver himself by his much strength"? Alas! no. There was *one* way of escape, but it was revealed to faith, not to sight, not to reason, not to imagination.

"By faith Noah, being *warned of God* of things *not seen* as yet, moved with fear [$\epsilon\upsilon\lambda\alpha\beta\eta\theta\epsilon\iota\varsigma$], prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." (Heb. xi. 7.) The Word of God brings His light to shine upon all that by which man's heart is deceived. It removes, completely, the gilding with which the serpent covers a vain, deceitful, passing world, over which hangs the sword of divine judgment. But it is only "faith" that will be "warned of God," when the things of which He speaks are "not seen as yet." Nature is governed by what it sees,—it is governed by its senses. Faith is governed by the pure Word of God; (inestimable treasure in this dark world!) this gives stability, let outward appearances be what they may. When God spoke to Noah of judgment impending, there was no sign of it,—it was "not seen as yet"; but the Word of God made it a present reality to the heart that was enabled to mix that Word with faith. Faith does not wait to *see* a thing ere it believes, for "faith cometh

by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

All that the man of faith needs, is to know that God has spoken; this imparts perfect certainty to his soul. "Thus saith the Lord," settles everything. A single line of sacred Scripture is an abundant answer to all the reasonings and all the imaginations of the human mind; and when one has the Word of God as the basis of his convictions, he may calmly stand against the full tide of human opinion and prejudice. It was the Word of God which sustained the heart of Noah during his long course of service; and the same Word has sustained the millions of God's saints from that day to this, in the face of the world's contradiction. Hence, we cannot set too high a value upon the Word of God. Without it, all is dark uncertainty; with it, all is light and peace. Where it shines, it marks out for the man of God a sure and a blessed path; where it shines not, one is left to wander amid the bewildering mazes of human tradition. How could Noah have "preached righteousness," for one hundred and twenty years, if he had not had the Word of God as the ground of his preaching? How could he have withstood the scoffs and sneers of an infidel world? How could he have persevered in testifying of "judgment to come," when not a cloud appeared on the world's horizon? Impossible. The Word of God was the ground on which he stood, and "the Spirit of Christ" enabled him to occupy, with holy decision, that elevated and immovable ground.

And now, my beloved Christian reader, what else

have we wherewith to stand, in service for Christ, in an evil day like the present? Surely, nothing; nor do we want aught else. The Word of God, and the Holy Ghost, by whom *alone* that Word can be understood, applied, or used, are all we want to equip us perfectly—to furnish us thoroughly "to all good works," under whatever head those works may range themselves. (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.) What rest for the heart! What relief from all Satan's imagery, and man's imaginations! God's pure, incorruptible, eternal Word! May our hearts adore Him for the inestimable treasure! "Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually"; but God's Word was the simple resting-place of Noah's heart.

"God said unto Noah, 'The end of all flesh is come before Me. . . . Make thee an ark of gopher wood.'" Here was man's ruin and God's remedy. Man had been allowed to pursue his career to the utmost limit, to bring his principles and his ways to maturity. The leaven had worked and filled the mass,—the evil had reached its climax. "All flesh" had become so bad that it could not be worse; wherefore nothing remained but for God to destroy *it* totally; and, at the same time, to save all those who should be found, according to His eternal counsels, linked with "the eighth person"—the only righteous man then existing. This brings out the doctrine of the cross in a very vivid manner. There we find, at once, God's judgment of nature with all its evil; and, at the same time, the revelation of His

saving grace, in all its fullness, and in all its perfect adaptation to those who have really reached the lowest point of their moral condition, as judged by Himself. "The day-spring from on high hath visited us." (Luke i. 78.) Where? Just *where we are*, as sinners. God has come down to the very deepest depths of our ruin. There is not a point in all the sinner's state to which the light of that blessed day-spring has not penetrated; but if it has thus penetrated, it must, by virtue of what it is, reveal our true character. The light must judge everything contrary to itself; but, while it does so, it also "gives the knowledge of salvation through the remission of sins." The cross, while it reveals God's judgment upon "all flesh," reveals His salvation for the lost and guilty sinner. Sin is perfectly judged—the sinner perfectly saved—God perfectly revealed, and perfectly glorified, in the cross.

If my reader will turn, for a moment, to the first epistle of Peter, he will find much light thrown upon this entire subject. At the third chapter, verse 18, we read, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which [Spirit] He went and preached [through Noah] to the spirits [now] in prison; which once were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water [δι υδατος]; to which the antitype [αντιτυπον] baptism doth also

now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, [as by water,]* but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who, having gone into heaven, is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject to Him."

This is a most important passage. It sets the doctrine of the ark and its connection with the death of Christ very distinctly before us. As in the deluge, so in the death of Christ, all the billows and waves of divine judgment passed over that which, in itself, was without sin. The creation was buried beneath the flood of Jehovah's righteous wrath; and the Spirit of Christ exclaims, "All Thy billows and Thy waves have gone over Me." (Psalm xlii. 7.) Here is a profound truth for the heart and con-

*It is impossible to over-estimate the wisdom of the Holy Ghost, as seen in the way in which He treats the ordinance of baptism, in the above remarkable passage. We know the evil use which has been made of baptism,—we know the false place it has gotten in the thoughts of many,—we know how that the efficacy, which belongs *only* to the blood of Christ, has been attributed to the water of baptism,—we know how the regenerating grace of the Holy Ghost has been transferred to water-baptism; and, with the knowledge of all this, we cannot but be struck with the way in which the Spirit of God guards the subject, by stating that it is not the mere washing away of the filth of the flesh, as by water, "but the answer of a good conscience toward God," which "answer" we get, not by baptism, how important soever it may be as an ordinance of the kingdom, but "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ," "who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification."

Baptism, I need hardly say, as an ordinance of divine institution, and in its divinely-appointed place, is most important and deeply significant; but when we find men, in one way or another, putting the figure in place of the substance, we are bound to expose the work of Satan by the light of the Word of God.

science of a believer. "*All* God's billows and waves" passed over the spotless Person of the Lord Jesus, when He hung upon the cross; and, as a most blessed consequence, not one of them remains to pass over the person of the believer. At Calvary, we see, in good truth, "the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven opened." "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy water-spouts." Christ drank the cup, and endured the wrath perfectly. He put Himself, judicially, under the full weight of all His people's liabilities, and gloriously discharged them. The belief of this gives settled peace to the soul. If the Lord Jesus has met all that could be against us, if He has removed out of the way every hindrance, if He has put away sin, if He has exhausted the cup of wrath and judgment on our behalf, if He has cleared the prospect of every cloud, should we not enjoy settled peace? Unquestionably. Peace is our unalienable portion. To us belong the deep and untold blessedness, and holy security, which redeeming love can bestow on the righteous ground of Christ's absolutely accomplished work.

Had Noah any anxiety about the billows of divine judgment? None whatever. How could he? He knew that "*all*" had been poured forth, while he himself was raised, by those very outpoured billows, into a region of cloudless peace. He floated in peace on that very water by which "all flesh" was judged. He was put beyond the reach of judgment; and put there, too, by God Himself. He might

have said, in the triumphant language of Romans viii, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" He had been invited in by Jehovah Himself, as we read, in chapter vii. 1, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark"; and when he had taken his place there, we read, "*the Lord shut him in.*" Here, assuredly, was full and perfect security for all within. Jehovah kept the door, and no one could go in or out without Him. There was both a window and a door to the ark. The Lord secured, with His own omnipotent hand, the door, and left Noah the window from which he might look upward to the place from whence all the judgment had emanated, and see that no judgment remained for him. The saved family could only look *upward*, because the window was "above." (Chap. vi. 16.) They could not see the waters of judgment, nor the death and desolation which those waters had caused. God's salvation—the "gopher wood," stood between them and all these things. They had only to gaze upward into a cloudless heaven, the eternal dwelling-place of the One who had condemned the world, and saved them.

Nothing can more fully express the believer's perfect security in Christ than those words, "the Lord shut him in." Who could open what God had shut? None. The family of Noah were as safe as God could make them. There was no power—angelic, human, or diabolical—which could possibly burst open the door of the ark, and let the waters in. That door was shut by the self-same hand that had

opened the windows of heaven, and broken up the fountains of the great deep. Thus Christ is spoken of as the One "that hath the key of David, He that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth." (Rev. iii. 7.) He also holds in His hand "the keys of hell and of death." (Rev. i. 18.) None can enter the portals of the grave, nor go forth therefrom, without Him. He has "all power in heaven and on earth." He is "head over all things to the Church," and in Him the believer is perfectly secure. (Matt. xxviii. 18; Eph. i. 22.) Who could touch Noah? What wave could penetrate that ark which was "pitched within and without with pitch"? Just so now, who can touch those who have, by faith, retreated into the shadow of the cross? Every enemy has been met and silenced—yes, silenced forever. The death of Christ has triumphantly answered every demur; while, at the same time, His resurrection is the satisfactory declaration of God's infinite complacency in that work which is, at once, the basis of His righteousness in receiving us, and of our confidence in drawing nigh unto Him.

Hence, therefore, the door of our Ark being secured, by the hand of God Himself, nothing remains for us but to enjoy the window; or, in other words, to walk in happy and holy communion with Him who has saved us from coming wrath, and made us heirs and expectants of coming glory. Peter speaks of those who "are blind, and cannot see afar off, and have forgotten that they were purged from their

old sins." (2 Peter i. 9.) This is a lamentable condition for any to be in, and it is the sure result of not cultivating diligent, prayerful communion with Him who has eternally shut us in in Christ.

Let us, now, ere we proceed further with Noah's history, glance, for a little, at the condition of those to whom he had so long preached righteousness. We have been looking at the *saved*, let us now look at the *lost*,—we have been thinking of those *within* the ark, let us now look at those *without*. No doubt, many an anxious look would be cast after the vessel of mercy, as it rose with the water; but, alas! "the door was shut"—the day of grace was over—the time of testimony closed, and that forever, so far as they were concerned. The same hand which had shut Noah *in* had shut them *out*, and it was as impossible for those without to get in as it was for those within to get out. The former were irrecoverably lost; the latter, effectually saved. The long-suffering of God, and the testimony of His servant, had both been slighted. Present things had engrossed them. "They did eat, they drank, they married wives, and were given in marriage, *until* the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all." (Luke xvii. 26, 27.) There was nothing wrong in any of these things, abstractedly looked at. The wrong was not in the things done, but in the doers of them. Every one of them might be done in the fear of the Lord, and to the glory of His holy name, were they only done in faith. But, alas! they were not so done. The

Word of God was rejected. He told of judgment, but they did not believe; He spoke of sin and ruin, but they were not convinced; He spoke of a remedy, but they would not give heed. They went on with their own plans and speculations, and had no room for God. They acted as if the earth belonged to them, by a lease, forever. They forgot that there was a clause of surrender. They thought not of that solemn "*until.*" God was shut out. "Every imagination of the thoughts of their heart was only evil continually," and hence, they could do nothing right. They thought, spake and acted for themselves. They did their own pleasure, and forgot God.

And, my reader, remember the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, how He said, "*As it was* in the days of Noah, *so shall it be* in the days of the Son of Man." Some would have us to believe, that ere the Son of Man appears in the clouds of heaven, this earth shall be covered, from pole to pole, with a fair mantle of righteousness. They would teach us to look for a reign of righteousness and peace, as the result of agencies now in operation; but the brief passage just quoted cuts up by the roots, in a moment, all such vain and delusive expectations. How was it in the days of Noah? Did righteousness cover the earth as the waters cover the sea?—was God's truth dominant?—was the earth filled with the knowledge of the Lord? Scripture replies, "The earth was filled with violence."—"All flesh had corrupted His way on the earth."—"The earth also was corrupt before God." Well, then, "*so* shall

it be in the days of the Son of Man." This is plain enough. "Righteousness" and "violence" are not very much like each other; neither is there any similarity between universal wickedness and universal peace. It only needs a heart subject to the Word, and freed from the influence of preconceived opinions, in order to understand the true character of the days immediately preceding "the coming of the Son of Man." Let not my reader be led astray. Let him reverently bow to Scripture. Let him look at the condition of the world "in the days before the flood"; and let him bear in mind, that "*as*" it was then, "*so*" shall it be at the close of this present period. This is most simple—most conclusive. There was nothing like a state of universal righteousness and peace then, neither shall there be anything like it by and by.

No doubt, man displayed abundant energy in making the world a comfortable and an agreeable place for himself; but that was a very different thing from making it a suitable place for God. So, also, at this present time; man is as busy as he can be in clearing the stones off the pathway of human life, and making it as smooth as possible; but this is not "making straight in the desert a highway for our God"; nor is it making "the rough places smooth" that all flesh may see the salvation of Jehovah. Civilization prevails; but civilization is not righteousness. The sweeping and garnishing are going forward; but it is not in order to fit the house for Christ, but for Antichrist. The wisdom of man is

put forth in order to cover, with the folds of his own drapery, the blots and blemishes of humanity; but, though covered, they are not removed!—they are underneath, and will, ere long, break out in more hideous deformity than ever. The painting of vermilion will soon be obliterated, and the carved cedar wood destroyed. The dams by which man sedulously seeks to stem the torrent of human wretchedness must soon give way before the overwhelming force thereof. All the efforts to confine the physical, the mental, and the moral degredation of Adam's posterity within those inclosures which human benevolence, if you please, has devised, must, in the sequel, prove abortive. The testimony has gone forth,—"The end of *all* flesh has come before Me." It has not come before man, but it has come before God; and, albeit, the voice of the scoffers may be heard, saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation"; yet the moment is rapidly hastening on, when those scoffers will get their answer. "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." (2 Peter iii. 4–10.) This, my reader, is the answer to the intellectual scoffs of the children of this world, but not to the spiritual affections and expectations of the children of God. These latter, thank God, have a totally different prospect, even to

meet the Bridegroom in the air, before evil shall have reached its culminating point, and therefore before the divine judgment shall be poured forth thereon. The Church of God looks not for the burning up of the world, but for the arising of "the bright and morning Star."

Now, in whatever way we look at the future—from whatever point of view we contemplate it, whether the object which presents itself to the soul's vision be the Church in glory, or the world in flames—the coming of the Bridegroom, or the breaking in of the thief—the morning Star, or the scorching sun—the translation, or the deluge, we must feel the unspeakable importance of attending to God's present testimony in grace to lost sinners. "*Now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation." (2 Cor. vi. 2.) "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." (2 Cor. v. 19.) He is reconciling now; He will be judging by and by: it is all grace now; it will be all wrath then: He is pardoning sin now, through the cross; He will punish it then, in hell, and that forever. He is sending out a message of purest, richest, freest grace. He is telling sinners of an accomplished redemption through the precious sacrifice of Christ. He is declaring that all is done. He is waiting to be gracious. "The long-suffering of our Lord is salvation." "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to

repentance." (2 Peter iii.) All this makes the present moment one of peculiar solemnity. Unmingled grace declared! unmingled wrath impending! How solemn!—how deeply solemn!

And, then, with what profound interest should we mark the unfolding of the divine purposes! Scripture sheds its light upon these things; and such a light too, that we need not, as another has said, "vacantly stare on passing events, as those who know not where they are and whither they are going." We should accurately know our bearings. We should fully understand the direct tendency of all the principles now at work. We should be well aware of the vortex toward which all the tributary streams are rapidly flowing on. Men dream of a golden age; they promise themselves a millennium of the arts and sciences; they feed upon the thought that "to-morrow shall be as this day, and more abundant." But, oh! how utterly vain are all those thoughts, dreams and promises. Faith can see the clouds gathering thickly around the world's horizon. Judgment is coming,—the day of wrath is at hand. The door will soon be shut. The "strong delusion" will soon set in, with terrible intensity. How needful, then, it is to raise a warning voice—to seek, by faithful testimony, to counteract man's pitiable self-complacency. True, in so doing, we shall be exposed to the charge which Ahab brought against Micaiah, of always prophesying evil; but no matter for that. Let us prophesy what the Word of God prophesies, and let us do this simply for the purpose

of "persuading men." The Word of God only removes from beneath our feet a hollow foundation, for the purpose of placing instead thereof a foundation which can never be moved. It only takes away from us a delusive hope, to give us, instead, "a hope which maketh not ashamed." It takes away "a broken reed," to give us "the rock of ages." It sets aside "a broken cistern, which can hold no water," to set in its place "the fountain of living waters." This is true love,—it is God's love. He will not cry, "peace, peace, when there is no peace," nor "daub with untempered mortar." He would have the sinner's heart resting sweetly in His own eternal Ark of safety, enjoying present communion with Himself, and fondly cherishing the hope, that, when all the ruin, the desolation, and the judgment, have passed away, it shall rest with Him in a restored creation.

We shall now turn to Noah, and contemplate him in a new position. We have seen him building the ark, we have seen him in the ark, and we shall now view him going forth of the ark, and taking his place in the new world.* "And God remembered Noah."

* I would here mention, for my reader's prayerful consideration, a thought very familiar to the minds of those who have specially given themselves to the study of what is called "dispensational truth" It has reference to Enoch and Noah. The former was taken away, as we have seen, before the judgment came; whereas the latter was carried through the judgment. Now, it is thought that Enoch is a figure of the Church, who shall be taken away before human evil reaches its climax, and before the divine judgment falls thereon. Noah, on the other hand, is a figure of the remnant of Israel, who shall be brought through the deep waters of affliction, and through the fire of judgment, and led into the full enjoy-

The strange work of judgment being over, the saved family, and all in association with them, come into remembrance. "God made a wind to pass over the earth; and the waters assuaged; the fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained." The beams of the sun now begin to act upon a world that had been baptized with a baptism of judgment. Judgment is God's "strange work." He delights not in, though He is glorified by, it. Blessed be His name, He is ever ready to leave the place of judgment, and enter that of mercy, because He delights in mercy.

"And it came to pass, at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made: and he sent forth a raven, which went forth, to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth." The unclean bird made its escape, and found, no doubt, a resting-place on some floating carcass. It sought not the ark again. Not so the dove,—"She found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark . . . and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark: and the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf, plucked off." Sweet emblem of the renewed mind, which, amid the surrounding desolation, seeks and finds its rest and portion in Christ; and not only so, but also lays

ment of millennial bliss, in virtue of God's everlasting covenant. I may add, that I quite receive this thought in reference to those two Old Testament fathers. I consider that it has the full support of the general scope and analogy of holy Scripture.

hold of the earnest of the inheritance, and furnishes the blessed proof that judgment has passed away, and that a renewed earth is coming fully into view. The carnal mind, on the contrary, can rest in anything and everything but Christ. It can feed upon all uncleanness. "The olive leaf" has no attraction for it. It can find all it needs in a scene of death, and hence is not occupied with the thought of a new world and its glories; but the heart that is taught and exercised by the Spirit of God, can only rest and rejoice in that in which He rests and rejoices. It rests in the Ark of His salvation "until the times of the restitution of all things." May it be thus with you and me, beloved reader,—may Jesus be the abiding rest and portion of our hearts, that so we may not seek them in a world which is under the judgment of God. The dove went back to Noah, and waited for his time of rest: and we should ever find our place with Christ, until the time of His exaltation and glory in the ages to come. "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." All we want, as to this, is a little patience. May God direct our hearts into His love, and into "the patience of Christ."

"And God spake unto Noah, saying, 'Go forth of the ark.'" The same God that had said, "Make thee an ark," and "Come thou into the ark," now says, "Go forth of the ark." "And Noah went forth . . . . and builded an altar unto the Lord." All is simple obedience. There is the obedience of faith and the worship of faith: both go together. The

altar is erected where, just before, all had been a scene of death and judgment. The ark had borne Noah and his family safely over the waters of judgment. It had carried him from the old into the new world, where he now takes his place as a worshiper.* And, be it observed, it was "unto the Lord" he erected his altar. Superstition would have worshiped *the ark*, as being the means of salvation. It is ever the tendency of the heart to displace God by His ordinances. Now, the ark was a very marked

*It is interesting to look at this entire subject of the ark and deluge, in connection with that most important and deeply significant ordinance of baptism. A truly baptized person, that is, one who, as the apostle says, "obeys from the heart that type of doctrine to which he is delivered," is one who has passed from the old world into the new, in spirit and principle, and by faith. The water rolls over his person, signifying that his old man is buried, that his place in nature is ignored—that his old nature is entirely set aside,—in short, that he is a dead man. When he is plunged beneath the water, expression is given to the fact that his name, place and existence in nature are put out of sight,—that the flesh, with all that pertained thereto—its sins, its iniquities, its liabilities—is buried in the grave of Christ, and never can come into God's sight again.

Again, when he rises up out of the water, expression is given to the truth, that he only comes up as the possessor of a new life, even the resurrection-life of Christ. If Christ had not been raised from the dead, the believer could not come up out of the water, but should remain buried beneath its surface, as the simple expression of the place which righteously belongs to nature. But, inasmuch as Christ rose from the dead, in the power of a new life, having entirely put away our sins, we also come up out of the water; and, in so doing, set forth the fact that we are put, by the grace of God, and through the death of Christ, in full possession of a new life, to which divine righteousness inseparably attaches. "We are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (See Rom. vi. and Col. ii. *passim*. Comp. also 1 Peter iii. 18-22.) All this makes the institution of baptism one of immense importance, and pregnant with meaning.

and manifest ordinance; but Noah's faith passed beyond the ark to the God of the ark; and hence, when he stepped out of it, instead of casting back a lingering look at it, or regarding it as an object of worship or veneration, he built an altar unto the Lord, and worshiped Him; and the ark is never heard of again.

This teaches us a very simple, but, at the same time, a very seasonable lesson. The moment the heart lets slip the reality of God Himself, there is no placing a limit to its declension; it is on the highway to the grossest forms of idolatry. In the judgment of faith, an ordinance is only valuable as it conveys God, in living power, to the soul,—that is to say, so long as faith can enjoy Christ therein, according to His own appointment. Beyond this, it is worth just nothing; and if it, in the smallest degree, comes between the heart and His precious work and His glorious Person, it ceases to be an ordinance of God, and becomes an instrument of the devil. In the judgment of superstition, the ordinance is everything, and God is shut out; and the name of God is only made use of to exalt the ordinance, and give it a deep hold of the human heart, and a mighty influence over the human mind. Thus it was that the children of Israel worshiped the brazen serpent. That which had once been a channel of blessing to them, because used of God, became, when their hearts had departed from the Lord, an object of superstitious veneration; and Hezekiah had to break it in pieces, and call it "a piece of

brass." In itself, it was only a "Nehushtan," but when used of God, it was a means of rich blessing. Now, faith owned it to be what divine revelation said it was; but superstition, throwing, as it ever does, divine revelation overboard, lost the real purpose of God in the thing, and actually made a god of the thing itself. (See 2 Kings xviii. 4.)

And, my reader, is there not a deep lesson in all this for the present age? I am convinced there is. We live in an age of ordinances. The atmosphere which enwraps the professing church, is impregnated with the elements of a traditionary religion, which robs the soul of Christ and His divinely full salvation. It is not that human traditions boldly deny that there is such a person as Christ, or such a thing as the cross of Christ: were they to do so, the eyes of many might be opened. However, it is not thus. The evil is of a far more insidious and dangerous character. Ordinances are added to Christ and the work of Christ. The sinner is not saved by Christ alone, but by Christ and ordinances. Thus he is robbed of Christ altogether; for it will assuredly be found that *Christ and ordinances* will prove, in the sequel, to be *ordinances and not Christ*. This is a solemn consideration for all who stand up for a religion of ordinances. "If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." It must be Christ wholly, or not at all. The devil persuades men that they are honoring Christ when they make much of His ordinances; whereas, all the while, he knows full well that they are, in reality, setting Christ entirely aside.

and deifying the ordinance. I would only repeat here a remark which I have made elsewhere, namely, that superstition makes *everything* of the ordinance; infidelity, profanity, and mysticism, make *nothing* of it; faith uses it according to divine appointment.

But I have already extended this section far beyond the limit which I had prescribed for it. I shall therefore close it with a hasty glance at the contents of chapter ix. In it we have the new covenant, under which creation was set, after the deluge, together with the token of that covenant. "And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.'" Observe, God's command to man, on his entrance into the restored earth, was to re-fill that earth,—not parts of the earth, but the earth. He desired to have men dispersed abroad, over the face of the world, and not relying upon their own concentrated energies. We shall see, in chapter xi, how man neglected all this.

The fear of man is now lodged in the heart of every other creature. Henceforth, the service rendered by the inferior orders of creation to man, must be the constrained result of "fear and dread."

In life and in death, the lower animals were to be at the service of man. All creation is delivered, by God's everlasting covenant, from the fear of a second deluge. Judgment is never again to take that shape. "The world that then was, being overflowed with *water*, perished; but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store,

reserved unto *fire* against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." The earth was once purged with water; and it will be again purged by fire; and in this second purgation none will escape, save those who have fled for refuge to Him who has passed through the deep waters of death, and met the fire of divine judgment.

"And God said, 'This is the token of the covenant . . . . I do set My bow in the cloud . . . and I will remember My covenant.'" The whole creation rests, as to its exemption from a second deluge, on the eternal stability of God's covenant, of which the bow is the token; and it is happy to bear in mind, that when the bow appears, the eye of God rests upon it; and man is cast not upon his own imperfect and most uncertain memory, but upon God's. "I," says God, "will remember." How sweet to think of what God will, and what He will not, remember! He will remember His covenant, but He will not remember His people's sins. The cross, which ratifies the former, puts away the latter. The belief of this gives peace to the troubled heart and uneasy conscience.

"And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that *the bow shall be seen in the cloud.*" Beautiful and most expressive emblem! The beams of the sun, reflected from that which threatens judgment, tranquilize the heart, as telling of God's covenant, God's salvation, and God's remembrance. Precious, most precious sunbeams! deriving additional beauty from the very cloud

which reflects them. How forcibly does this bow in the cloud remind us of Calvary. There we see a cloud indeed—a dark, thick, heavy cloud of judgment, discharging itself upon the sacred head of the Lamb of God—a cloud so dark, that even at midday "there was darkness over all the earth." But, blessed be God, faith discerns, in that heaviest cloud that ever gathered, the most brilliant and beauteous bow that ever appeared; for it sees the bright beams of God's eternal love darting through the awful gloom and reflected in the cloud. It hears, too, the words, "It is finished," issuing from amid the darkness; and in those words it recognizes the perfect ratification of God's everlasting covenant, not only with creation, but with the tribes of Israel and the Church of God.

The last paragraph of this chapter presents a humiliating spectacle. The lord of creation fails to govern himself,—"And Noah began to be a husbandman, and he planted a vineyard; and he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent." What a condition for Noah, the only righteous man, the preacher of righteousness, to be found in! Alas! what is man? Look at him where you will, and you see only failure. In Eden, he fails; in the restored earth, he fails; in Canaan, he fails; in the Church, he fails; in the presence of millennial bliss and glory, he fails;—he fails everywhere, and in all things: there is no good thing in him. Let his advantages be ever so great, his privileges ever so vast, his positi...

ever so desirable, he can only exhibit failure and sin.

We must, however, look at Noah in two ways, namely, as *a type*, and as *a man;* and while the type is full of beauty and meaning, the man is full of sin and folly; yet the Holy Ghost has written these words: "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation; and Noah walked with God." Divine grace had covered all his sins, and clothed his person with a spotless robe of righteousness. Though Noah exposed his nakedness, God did not see it, for He looked not at him in the weakness of his own condition, but in the full power of divine and everlasting righteousness. Hence we may see how entirely astray—how totally alienated from God and His thoughts—Ham was, in the course he adopted; he evidently knew nothing of the blessedness of the man whose iniquity is forgiven, and his sin covered. On the contrary, Shem and Japheth exhibit, in their conduct, a fine specimen of the divine method of dealing with human nakedness; wherefore they inherit a blessing, whereas Ham inherits a curse.

CHAPTER X

THIS section of our book records the generations of Noah's three sons, noticing, especially, Nimrod, the founder of the kingdom of Babel, or Babylon, a name which occupies a very prominent place on the page of inspiration. Babylon is a well-

known name—a well-known influence. From the tenth chapter of Genesis, down to the eighteenth chapter of Revelation, Babylon again and again appears before us, and always as something decidedly hostile to those who occupy, for the time being, the position of public testimony for God. Not that we are to look upon the Babylon of Old Testament scripture as identical with the Babylon of the Apocalypse. By no means. I believe the former is a city; the latter, a system; but both the city and the system exert a powerful influence against God's people. Hardly had Israel entered upon the wars of Canaan, when "a Babylonish garment" brought defilement and sorrow, defeat and confusion, into the host. This is the earliest record of Babylon's pernicious influence upon the people of God; but every student of Scripture is aware of the place which Babylon gets throughout the entire history of Israel.

This would not be the place to notice, in detail, the various passages in which this city is introduced. I would only remark here, that whenever God has a corporate witness on the earth, Satan has a Babylon to mar and corrupt that witness. When God connects His name with a city on the earth, then Babylon takes the form of a city; and when God connects His name with the Church, then Babylon takes the form of a corrupt religious system, called "the great whore," "the mother of abominations," etc. In a word, Satan's Babylon is always seen as the instrument moulded and fashioned by his hand, for the purpose of counteracting the divine

operations, whether in Israel of old, or the Church now. Throughout the Old Testament, Israel and Babylon are seen, as it were, in opposite scales,—when Israel is up, Babylon is down; and when Babylon is up, Israel is down. Thus, when Israel had utterly failed as Jehovah's witness, "the king of Babylon broke his bones," and swallowed him up. The vessels of the house of God, which ought to have remained in the *city* of Jerusalem, were carried away to the *city* of Babylon. But Isaiah, in his sublime prophecy, leads us onward to the opposite of all this. He presents, in most magnificent strains, a picture, in which Israel's star is in the ascendant, and Babylon entirely sunk.—"And it shall come to pass in the day that the Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve, that thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressors ceased!—the golden city ceased! . . . . since *thou* art laid down, no feller is come up against *us*." (Isaiah xiv. 3–8.)

Thus much as to the Babylon of the Old Testament. Then, as to the Babylon of Revelation, my reader has only to turn to the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of that book to see her character and end. She is presented in marked contrast with the bride, the Lamb's wife; and as to her end, she is cast as a great millstone into the sea; after which we have the marriage of the Lamb, with all its accompanying bliss and glory.

However, I could not attempt to pursue this most interesting subject here: I have merely glanced at it in connection with the name of Nimrod. I feel assured that my reader will find himself amply repaid for any trouble he may take in the close examination of all those scriptures in which the name of Babylon is introduced. We shall now return to our chapter.

"And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be *a mighty one in the earth.* He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, 'Even as Nimrod, the mighty hunter before the Lord.' And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, *in the land of Shinar.*" Here, then, we have the character of the founder of Babylon. He was "a mighty one *in the earth*"—"a mighty hunter before the Lord." Such was the origin of Babylon; and its character, throughout the entire book of God, remarkably corresponds therewith. It is always seen as a mighty influence in the earth, acting in positive antagonism to everything which owes its origin to heaven; and it is not until this Babylon has been totally abolished that the cry is heard, amid the hosts above, "Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Then, all Babylon's mighty hunting will be over forever,—whether it be its hunting of wild beasts to subdue them, or its hunting of souls to destroy them. All its might and all its glory, all its pomp and pride, its wealth and luxury, its light and joy, its glitter and glare, its powerful attractions and wide-spread influence, shall have passed away forever. She shall

be swept with the besom of destruction, and plunged in the darkness, the horror and desolation, of an everlasting night. "How long, O Lord?"

CHAPTER XI

THIS is a chapter of very deep interest to the spiritual mind. It records two great facts, namely, the building of Babel, and the call of Abraham; or, in other words, man's effort to provide for himself, and God's provision made known to faith,—man's attempt to establish himself *in the earth*, and God's calling a man *out of* it, to find his portion and his home *in heaven*.

"And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. . . . And they said, 'Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.'" The human heart ever seeks a name, a portion, and a centre in the earth. It knows nothing of aspirations after heaven, heaven's God, or heaven's glory. Left to itself, it will ever find its objects in this lower world,—it will ever "build beneath the skies." It needs God's call, God's revelation, and God's power, to lift the heart of man above this present world, for man is a grov-

eling creature—alienated from heaven, and allied to earth. In the scene now before us, there is no acknowledgment of God,—no looking up to, or waiting on, Him; nor was it the thought of the human heart to set up a place in which God might dwell—to gather materials for the purpose of building a habitation for Him—alas! no; His name is never once mentioned. To make a name for himself was man's object on the plain of Shinar; and such has been his object ever since. Whether we contemplate man on the plain of Shinar, or on the banks of the Tiber, we find him to be the same self-seeking, self-exalting, God-excluding creature throughout. There is a melancholy consistency in all his purposes, his principles and his ways,—he ever seeks to shut out God and exalt himself.

Now, in what light soever we view this Babel confederacy, it is most instructive to see in it the early display of man's genius and energies, regardless of God. In looking down along the stream of human history, we may easily perceive a marked tendency to confederacy, or association. Man seeks, for the most part, to compass his great ends in this way. Whether it be in the way of philanthropy, religion, or politics, nothing can be done without an association of men regularly organized. It is well to see this principle,—well to mark its incipient working—to see the earliest model which the page of inspiration affords of a human association, as exhibited on the plain of Shinar, in its design, its object, its attempt, its overthrow. If we look around us at the

present moment, we see the whole scene filled with associations. To name them were useless, for they are as numerous as are the purposes of the human heart. But it is important to mark, that the first of all these was the Shinar association, for the establishment of the human interests, and the exaltation of the human name,—objects which may well be set in competition with any that engage the attention of this enlightened and civilized age. But, in the judgment of faith, there is one grand defect, namely, God is shut out; and to attempt to exalt man without God, is to exalt him to a dizzy height, only that he may be dashed down into hopeless confusion and irretrievable ruin. The Christian should only know *one* association, and that is, the Church of the living God, incorporated by the Holy Ghost, who came down from heaven as the witness of Christ's glorification, to baptize believers into one body, and constitute them God's dwelling-place. Babylon is the very opposite of this, in every particular; and she becomes at the close, as we know, "the habitation of devils." (See Rev. xviii.)

"And the Lord said, 'Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.' So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth; and they left off to build the city." Such was the end of man's first associa-

tion. Thus it will be to the end. "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces . . . . gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces." (Isaiah viii. 9.) How different it is when God associates men! In the second chapter of Acts, we see the blessed One coming down, in infinite grace, to meet man, in the very circumstances in which his sin had set him. The Holy Ghost enabled the messengers of grace to deliver their message in the very tongue wherein each was born. Precious proof this, that God desired to reach man's heart with the sweet story of grace! The law from the fiery mount was not thus promulgated. When God was telling what man ought to be, He spoke in one tongue; but when He was telling what He Himself was, He spoke in many. Grace broke through the barrier which man's pride and folly had caused to be erected, in order that every man might hear and understand the glad tidings of salvation—"the wonderful works of God." And to what end was this? Just to associate men on God's ground, round God's centre, and on God's principles. It was to give them, in reality, one language, one centre, one object, one hope, one life. It was to gather them in such a way as that they never should be scattered or confounded again; to give them a name and a place which should endure forever; to build for them a tower and a city which should not only have their top reaching *to* heaven, but their imperishable foundation laid *in* heaven by the om-

nipotent hand of God Himself. It was to gather them around the glorious Person of a risen and highly exalted Christ, and unite them all in one grand design of magnifying and adoring Him.

If my reader will turn to the seventh chapter of Revelation, he will find, at the close thereof, "All nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," standing round the Lamb, and, with one voice, ascribing all praise to Him. Thus the three scriptures may be read in most interesting and profitable connection. In Genesis xi, God gives various tongues as an expression of His *judgment;* in Acts ii, He gives various tongues as an expression of *grace;* and in Rev. vii, we see all those tongues gathered round the Lamb *in glory*. How much better it is, therefore, to find our place in God's association than in man's! The former ends in glory, the latter in confusion; the former is carried forward by the energy of the Holy Ghost, the latter by the unhallowed energy of fallen man; the former has for its object the exaltation of Christ, the latter has for its object the exaltation of man, in some way or other.

Finally, I would say, that all who sincerely desire to know the true character, object and issue of human associations, should read the opening verses of Genesis xi; and, on the other hand, all who desire to know the excellency, the beauty, the power, the enduring character of divine association, should look at that holy, living, heavenly corporation, which is called, in the New Testament, the Church of the living God—the body of Christ—the bride of the Lamb.

May the Lord enable us to look at and apprehend all these things, in the power of faith; for only in this way can they profit our souls. Points of truth however interesting, scriptural knowledge however profound and extensive, biblical criticism however accurate and valuable, may all leave the heart barren and the affections cold. We want to find Christ in the Word; and, having found Him, to feed on Him by faith. This would impart freshness, unction, power, vitality, energy and intensity, all of which we deeply stand in need of in this day of freezing formalism. What is the value of a chilling orthodoxy without a living Christ, known in all His powerful, personal attractions? No doubt, sound doctrine is immensely important,—every faithful servant of Christ will feel himself imperatively called upon to "hold fast the form of sound words";—but, after all, a living Christ is the very soul and life—the joints and marrow—the sinews and arteries—the essence and substance of sound doctrine. May we, by the power of the Holy Ghost, see more beauty and preciousness in Christ, and thus be weaned from the spirit and principles of Babylon.

We shall, God willing, consider the remainder of chapter xi in the next section.

CHAPTER XII

THE book of Genesis is, for the most part, taken up with the history of seven men, namely, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. There is, I doubt not, a specific line of truth brought out in connection with each of those men. Thus, for example, in Abel we have the great foundation-truth of man's coming to God, in the way of atonement—atonement apprehended by faith. In Enoch, we have the proper portion and hope of the heavenly family; while Noah presents to us the destiny of the earthly family. Enoch was taken to heaven before the judgment came; Noah was carried through the judgment into a restored earth. Thus, in each, we have a distinct character of truth, and, as a consequence, a distinct phase of faith. My reader can pursue the subject fully in connection with the eleventh of Hebrews; and I feel assured he will find much interest and profit in so doing. We shall now proceed with our immediate theme, namely, the call of Abraham.

By comparing chapter xii. 1, chapter xi. 31, with Acts vii. 2–4, we learn a truth of immense practical value to the soul. "The Lord *had* said unto Abram 'Get thee out of thy country, and *from thy kindred*, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee.'" (Chap. xii. 1.) Such was the communication made to Abraham—a communication of

the most definite character, designed of God to act upon Abraham's heart and conscience. "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, and said unto him, 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into a land that I shall show thee.' Then went he forth out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran (or Haran); and from thence, *when his father was dead*, he removed him into this land wherein ye now dwell." (Acts vii. 2–4.) The result of this communication is given in chapter xi. 31,—"And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, *to go into the land of Canaan:* and they came *unto Haran, and dwelt there.* . . . . and Terah died in Haran."

From all these passages taken together, we learn that the ties of nature hindered the full response of Abraham's soul to the call of God. Though called to Canaan, he nevertheless tarried at Haran till nature's tie was snapped by death, and then, with unimpeded step, he made his way to the place to which "the God of glory" had called him. This is full of meaning. The influences of nature are ever hostile to the full realization and practical power of "the calling of God." We are sadly prone to take lower ground than that which the divine call would set before us. It needs great simplicity and integrity of faith to enable the soul to rise to the height of

God's thoughts, and to make our own of that which He reveals.

The apostle's prayer (Eph. i. 15–22.) demonstrates how fully he, by the Holy Ghost, entered into the difficulty with which the Church would ever have to contend, in seeking to apprehend "the hope of *God's calling*, and the riches of the glory of *His* inheritance in the saints;" because, evidently, if we fail to apprehend the calling, we cannot "walk worthy" thereof. I must know where I am called to go, before I can go thither. Had Abraham's soul been fully under the power of the truth that "God's calling" was to Canaan, and that there, too, lay "his inheritance," he could not have remained in Charran. And so with us. If we are led by the Holy Ghost into the understanding of the truth, that we are called with a heavenly calling,—that our home, our portion, our hope, our inheritance, are all above, "where Christ sitteth at God's right hand," we could never be satisfied to maintain a standing, seek a name, or lay up an inheritance, on the earth. The two things are incompatible: this is the true way to look at the matter. The heavenly calling is not an empty dogma, a powerless theory, nor a crude speculation. It is either a divine reality, or it is absolutely nothing. Was Abraham's call to Canaan a speculation?—was it a mere theory about which he might talk or argue, while, at the same time, he continued in Charran? Assuredly not. It was a truth —a divine truth—a powerfully practical truth. He was called to Canaan, and God could not possibly

sanction his stopping short thereof. Thus it was with Abraham, and thus it is with us. If we would enjoy the divine sanction and the divine presence, we must be seeking, by faith, to act upon the divine call. That is to say, we must seek to reach, in experience, in practice, and moral character, the point to which God has called us, and that point is, full fellowship with His own Son—fellowship with Him in His rejection below, fellowship with Him in His acceptance above.

But as, in Abraham's case, it was death that broke the link by which nature bound him to Charran, so, in our case, it is death which breaks the link by which nature ties us down to this present world. We must realize the truth that we have died in Christ, our Head and Representative,—that our place in nature, and in the world, is amongst the things that were,—that the cross of Christ is to us what the Red Sea was to Israel, namely, that which separates us forever from the land of death and judgment. Thus only shall we be able to walk, in any measure, "worthy of the calling wherewith we are called"—our high, our holy, our heavenly calling—our "calling of God in Christ Jesus."

And here I would dwell, for a little, on the cross of Christ, in its two grand, fundamental phases; or, in other words, the cross as the basis of our worship and our discipleship, our peace and our testimony, our relation with God and our relation with the world. If, as a convicted sinner, I look at the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, I behold in it the everlast-

ing foundation of my peace. I see my "sin" put away, as to the root or principle thereof, and I see my "sins" borne. I see God to be, in very deed, "for me," and that, moreover, in the very condition in which my convicted conscience tells me I am. The cross unfolds God as the *sinner's* Friend,—it reveals Him in that most wondrous character, as the Righteous Justifier of the most ungodly sinner. Creation never could do this: providence never could do this. Therein I may see God's power, His majesty, and His wisdom: but what if all these things should be ranged against me? Looked at in themselves, abstractedly, they would be so, for I am a sinner; and power, majesty, and wisdom, could not put away my sin, nor justify God in receiving me.

The introduction of the cross, however, changes the aspect of things entirely. There I find God dealing with sin in such a manner as to glorify Himself infinitely. There I see the magnificent display and perfect harmony of all the divine attributes. I see love, and such love as captivates and assures my heart, and weans it, in proportion as I realize it, from every other object. I see wisdom, and such wisdom as baffles devils and astonishes angels. I see power, and such power as bears down all opposition. I see holiness, and such holiness as repulses sin to the very furthest point of the moral universe, and gives the most intense expression of God's abhorrence thereof that could possibly be given. I see grace, and such grace as sets the sinner in the very presence of God—yea, puts him into His bosom.

Where could I see all these things but in the cross? Nowhere else. Look where you please, and you cannot find aught that so blessedly combines those two great points, namely, "glory to God in the highest," and "on earth peace."

How precious, therefore, is the cross, in this its first phase, as the basis of the sinner's peace, the basis of his worship, and the basis of his eternal relationship with the God who is there so blessedly and so gloriously revealed? How precious to God, as furnishing Him with a righteous ground on which to go in the full display of all His matchless perfections, and in His most gracious dealings with the sinner! So precious is it to God, that, as a recent writer has well remarked, "All that He has said—all that He has done, from the very beginning, indicates that it was ever uppermost in His heart. And no wonder! His dear and well-beloved Son was to hang there, between heaven and earth, the object of all the shame and suffering that men and devils could heap upon Him, because He loved to do His Father's will, and redeem the children of His grace. It will be the grand centre of attraction, as the fullest expression of His love, throughout eternity."

Then, as the basis of our practical discipleship and testimony, the cross demands our most profound consideration. In this aspect of it, I need hardly say, it is as perfect as in the former. The same cross which connects me with God, has separated me from the world. A dead man is, evidently, done with the world; and hence, the believer, having died

in Christ, is done with the world; and, having risen with Christ, is connected with God, in the power of a new life—a new nature. Being thus inseparably linked with Christ, he, of necessity, participates in His acceptance with God, and in His rejection by the world. The two things go together. The former makes him a worshiper and a citizen in heaven, the latter makes him a witness and a stranger on earth. That brings him inside the veil: this puts him outside the camp. The one is as perfect as the other. If the cross has come between me and my sins, it has just as really come between me and the world. In the former case, it puts me into the place of peace with God; in the latter, it puts me into the place of hostility with the world, *i. e.*, in a moral point of view; though, in another sense, it makes me the patient, humble witness of that precious, unfathomable, eternal grace which is set forth in the cross.

Now the believer should clearly understand, and rightly distinguish between, both the above phases of the cross of Christ. He should not profess to enjoy the one, while he refuses to enter into the other. If his ear is open to hear Christ's voice within the vail, it should be open also to hear His voice outside the camp;—if he enters into the atonement which the cross has accomplished, he should also realize the rejection which it necessarily involves. The former flows out of the part which God had in the cross; the latter, out of the part which man had therein. It is our happy privilege,

not only to be done with our sins, but to be done with the world also. All this is involved in the doctrine of the cross. Well, therefore, might the apostle say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Paul looked upon the world as a thing which ought to be nailed to the cross; and the world, in having crucified Christ, had crucified all who belonged to Him. Hence there is a double crucifixion, as regards the believer and the world; and were this fully entered into, it would prove the utter impossibility of ever amalgamating the two. Beloved reader, let us deeply, honestly, and prayerfully ponder these things; and may the Holy Ghost give us the ability to enter into the full practical power of both the phases of the cross of Christ.

We shall now return to our theme.

We are not told how long Abraham tarried at Haran; yet God graciously waited on His servant until, freed from nature's clog, he could fully obey His command. There was, however, no accommodation of that command to the circumstances of nature. This would never do. God loves His servants too well to deprive them of the full blessedness of entire obedience. There was no fresh revelation to Abraham's soul during the time of his sojourn in Haran. It is well to see this. We must act up to the light already communicated, and then God will give us more. "To him that hath shall more be given,"—this is God's principle. Still, we must re-

member that God will never *drag* us along the path of true-hearted discipleship. This would greatly lack the moral excellency which characterizes all the ways of God. He does not *drag*, but *draw*, us along the path which leads to ineffable blessedness in Himself; and if we do not see that it is for our real advantage to break through all the barriers of nature, in order to respond to God's call, we forsake our own mercies. But, alas! our hearts little enter into this. We begin to calculate about the sacrifices, the hindrances, and the difficulties, instead of bounding along the path, in eagerness of soul, as knowing and loving the One whose call has sounded in our ears.

There is much true blessing to the soul in every step of obedience; for obedience is the fruit of faith, and faith puts us into living association and communion with God Himself. Looking at obedience in this light, we can easily see how distinctly it is marked off, in every feature of it, from legality. This latter sets a man, with the entire burden of his sins on him, to serve God by keeping the law; hence, the soul is kept in constant torture, and, so far from running in the path of obedience, it has not even taken the very first step. True obedience, on the contrary, is simply the manifestation or outflow of a new nature, communicated in grace. To this new nature God graciously imparts precepts for its guidance; and it is perfectly certain that the divine nature, guided by the divine precepts, can never, by any possibility, resolve itself into legality. What

constitutes legality, is, the old nature taking up God's precepts and assaying to carry them out. To attempt to regulate man's fallen nature, by God's pure and holy law, is as useless and absurd as anything can be. How could fallen nature breathe an atmosphere so pure? Impossible. Both the atmosphere and the nature must be divine.

But not only does the blessed God impart a divine nature to the believer, and guide that nature by His heavenly precepts, He also sets before it suited hopes and expectations. Thus, in Abraham's case, "*the God of glory* appeared unto him." And for what purpose? To set before his soul's vision an attractive object—"a land that *I* will show thee." This was not compulsion, but attraction. God's land was, in the judgment of the new nature—the judgment of faith—far better than Ur, or Charran: and albeit, he had not *seen* the land, yet, inasmuch as it was God's land, faith judged it to be worth having, and not only worth having, but also fully worth the surrender of present things. Hence, we read, "by faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive as an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." That is to say, "he walked by faith, not by sight." Though he had not seen with his eyes, he believed with his heart, and faith became the great moving spring in his soul. Faith rests on a far more solid ground than the evidence of our senses, and that is, the Word of God. Our senses may deceive us, but God's Word never can.

Now, the entire truth of the divine nature, together with the precepts which guide, and the hopes which animate, it—the whole of the divine doctrine respecting these things, is completely thrown overboard by the system of legalism. The legalist teaches that we must surrender earth in order to get heaven. But how can fallen nature surrender that to which it is allied? How can it be attracted by that in which it sees no charms? Heaven has no charms for nature; yea, it is the very last place it would like to be found in. Nature has no taste for heaven, its occupations, or its occupants. Were it possible for nature to find itself there, it would be miserable. Thus, then, nature has no ability to surrender earth, and no desire to get heaven. True, it would be glad to escape hell and its ineffable torment, gloom and misery; but the desire to escape hell, and the desire to get heaven, spring from two very different sources. The former may exist in the old nature; the latter can only be found in the new. Were there no "lake of fire," and no "worm" in hell, nature would not so shrink from it. The same principle holds good in reference to all of nature's pursuits and desires. The legalist teaches that we must give up sin before we can get righteousness. But nature cannot give up sin; and as to righteousness, it absolutely hates it. True, it would like a certain amount of religion; but it is only with the idea that religion will preserve it from hell fire. It does not love religion because of its introducing the soul to the present enjoyment of God and His ways.

How different from all this miserable system of legalism, in every phase thereof, is "the gospel of the glory of the blessed God"! This gospel reveals God Himself coming down in perfect grace, and putting away sin by the sacrifice of the cross; putting it away, in the most absolute manner, on the ground of eternal righteousness, inasmuch as Christ suffered for it, having been made sin for us. And not only is God seen putting away sin, but also imparting a new life, even the risen life of His own risen, exalted, and glorified Son; which life every true believer possesses, in virtue of being linked, in God's eternal counsels, with Him who was nailed to the cross, but is now on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. This nature, as we have remarked, He graciously guides by the precepts of His holy Word, applied in power by the Holy Ghost. He also animates it by the presentation of indestructible hopes. He reveals, in the distance, "the hope of glory"—"a city which hath foundations"—"a better country, that is, a heavenly"—the "many mansions" of the Father's house on high—"golden harps"—"green palms" and "white robes"—"a kingdom which cannot be moved"—everlasting association with Himself, in those regions of bliss and light, where sorrow and darkness can never enter—the unspeakable privilege of being led, throughout the countless ages of eternity, "beside the still waters, and through the green pastures" of redeeming love. How different is all this from the legalist's notion! Instead of calling upon me to educate and

manage, by the dogmas of systematic religion, an irremediably corrupt nature, in order that thereby I may surrender an earth that I love, and attain to a heaven which I hate, He, in infinite grace, and on the ground of Christ's accomplished sacrifice, bestows upon me a nature which can enjoy heaven, and a heaven for that nature to enjoy; and not only a heaven, but Himself the unfailing spring of all heaven's joy.

Such is God's most excellent way. Thus He dealt with Abraham, thus He dealt with Saul of Tarsus, thus He deals with us. The God of glory showed Abraham a better country than Ur or Charran. He showed Saul of Tarsus a glory so bright, that it closed his eyes to all earth's brightest glories, and caused him to count them all "but dung," that He might win that blessed One who had appeared to him, and whose voice had spoken to his inmost soul. He saw a heavenly Christ in glory; and, throughout the remainder of his course, notwithstanding the weakness of the earthen vessel, that heavenly Christ and that heavenly glory engrossed his whole soul.

"And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land." The presence of the Canaanite in God's land would necessarily prove a trial to Abraham. It would be a demand upon his faith and hope, an exercise of heart, a trial of patience. He had left Ur and Charran behind, and come into the country of which "the God of glory" had spoken to him, and there he finds "the Canaan-

ite." But there, too, he finds the Lord,—"And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, 'Unto thy seed will I give this land.'" The connection between the two statements is beautiful and touching.

"The Canaanite was then in the land," and lest Abraham's eye should rest upon the Canaanite, the present possessor of the land, Jehovah appears to him as the One who was going to give the land to him and to his seed forever. Thus Abraham was taken up with the Lord, and not with the Canaanite. This is full of instruction for us. The Canaanite in the land is the expression of the power of Satan; but, instead of being occupied with Satan's power to keep us out of the inheritance, we are called to apprehend Christ's power to bring us in. "We wrestle not with flesh and blood, ... but with spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies." The very sphere into which we are called is the sphere of our conflict. Should this terrify us? By no means. We have Christ there—a victorious Christ, in whom we are "more than conquerors." Hence, instead of indulging "a spirit of fear," we cultivate a spirit of worship. "And there builded he an *altar* unto the Lord, who appeared unto him." "And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his *tent*." The altar and the tent give us the two great features of Abraham's character. A worshiper of God, a stranger in the world—most blessed characteristics! Having nothing on earth—having our all in God. Abraham

had "not so much as to set his foot upon;" but he had God to enjoy, and that was enough.

However, faith has its trials, as well as its answers. It is not to be imagined that the man of faith, having pushed out from the shore of circumstances, finds it all smooth and easy sailing. By no means. Again and again, he is called to encounter rough seas and stormy skies; but it is all graciously designed to lead him into deeper and more matured experience of what God is to the heart that confides in Him. Were the sky always without a cloud, and the ocean without a ripple, the believer would not know so well the God with whom he has to do; for, alas! we know how prone the heart is to mistake the peace of circumstances for the peace of God. When everything is going on smoothly and pleasantly,—our property safe, our business prosperous, our children and servants carrying themselves agreeably, our residence comfortable, our health excellent,—everything, in short, just to our mind, how apt we are to mistake the peace which reposes upon such circumstances, for that peace which flows from the realized presence of Christ. The Lord knows this; and therefore He comes in, in one way or another, and stirs up the nest, that is, if we are found nestling in circumstances, instead of in Himself.

But, again, we are frequently led to judge of the rightness of a path by its exemption from trial, and *vise versa*. This is a great mistake. The path of obedience may often be found most trying to flesh

and blood. Thus, in Abraham's case, he was not only called to encounter the Canaanite, in the place to which God had called him, but there was also "a famine in the land." Should he, therefore, have concluded that he was not in his right place? Assuredly not. That would have been to judge according to the sight of his eyes, the very thing which faith never does. No doubt it was a deep trial to the heart, an inexplicable puzzle to nature; but to faith it was all plain and easy. When Paul was called into Macedonia, almost the first thing he had to encounter was the prison at Philippi. This, to a heart out of communion, would have seemed a death-blow to the entire mission. But Paul never questioned the rightness of his position; he was enabled to "sing praises" in the midst of it all, assured that everything was just as it should be: and so it was; for in the prison of Philippi was one of God's vessels of mercy, who could not, humanly speaking, have heard the gospel, had not the preachers of it been thrust into the very place where he was. The devil was made, in spite of himself, the instrument of sending the gospel to the ears of one of God's elect.

Now, Abraham should have reasoned in the same way in reference to the famine. He was in the very place in which God had set him; and, evidently, he received no direction to leave it. True, the famine was there; and, moreover, Egypt was at hand, offering deliverance from pressure; still the path of God's servant was plain. *It is better to starve in*

Canaan, if it should be so, than live in luxury in Egypt,—it is better far to suffer in God's path, than be at ease in Satan's,—it is better to be poor with Christ, than rich without Him. "Abraham had sheep, and oxen, and he-asses, and men-servants, and maid-servants, and she-asses, and camels." Substantial proofs, the natural heart would doubtless say, of the rightness of his step in going down to Egypt. But, ah! he had no altar—no communion. Egypt was not the place of God's presence. He lost more than he gained by going thither. This is ever the case. Nothing can ever make up for the loss of our communion with God. Exemption from temporary pressure, and the accession of the greatest wealth, are but poor equivalents for what one loses by diverging a hair's breadth from the straight path of obedience. How many of us can add our amen to this! How many, in order to avoid the trial and exercise connected with God's path, have slipped aside into the current of this present evil world, and thereby brought leanness and barrenness, heaviness and gloom, into their souls! It may be they have, to use the common expression, "made money," increased their store, obtained the world's favor, been "entreated well" by its Pharaohs, gotten a name and a position amongst men; but are these a proper equivalent for joy in God, communion, liberty of heart, a pure, uncondemning conscience, a thankful, worshiping spirit, vigorous testimony, and effectual service? Alas! for the man that can think so. And yet all the above in-

comparable blessings have been often sold for a little ease, a little influence, a little money.

Christian reader, let us watch against the tendency to slip aside from the narrow, yet safe, the *sometimes*-rough, yet *always*-pleasant, path of simple, whole-hearted obedience. Let us keep guard—jealous, careful guard—over "faith and a pure conscience," for which nothing can compensate. Should trial come, let us, instead of turning aside into Egypt, wait on God; and thus the trial, instead of proving an occasion of stumbling, will prove an opportunity for obedience. Let us, when tempted to slip into the course of the world, remember Him "who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." (Gal. i. 4.) If such was His love for us, and such His sense of the true character of this present world, that He gave Himself in order to deliver us from it, shall we deny Him by plunging again into that from which His cross has forever delivered us? May God Almighty forbid! May He keep us in the hollow of His hand, and under the shadow of His wings, until we see Jesus as He is, and be like Him, and with Him forever.

CHAPTER XIII

THE opening of this chapter presents to us a subject of immense interest to the heart, namely, the true character of divine restoration. When the child of God has, in any way, declined in his spiritual condition, and lost his communion, he is in great danger, when conscience begins to work, of failing in the apprehension of divine grace, and of stopping short of the proper mark of divine restoration. Now, we know that God does everything in a way entirely worthy of Himself. Whether He creates, redeems, converts, restores, or provides, He can only act like Himself. What is worthy of Himself is, ever and only, His standard of action. This is unspeakably happy for us, inasmuch as we would ever seek to "limit the Holy One of Israel;" and in nothing are we so prone to limit Him as in His restoring grace. In the case now before us, we see that Abraham was not only delivered out of Egypt, but brought back "unto the place where his tent had been *at the beginning*, ... unto the place of the altar which he had made there *at the first:* and there Abraham called on the name of the Lord." Nothing can satisfy God, in reference to a wanderer or backslider, but his being entirely restored. We, in the self-righteousness of our hearts, might imagine that such an one should take a lower place than that which he had formerly occupied; and so he

should, were it a question of his merit or his character; but inasmuch as it is altogether a question of grace, it is God's prerogative to fix the standard of restoration; and His standard is set forth in the following passage: "If thou wilt return, O Israel, return *to Me*." It is thus that God restores, and it would be unworthy of Himself to do anything else. He will either not restore at all, or else restore in such a way as to magnify and glorify the riches of His grace. Thus, when the leper was brought back, he was actually conducted "to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation;" when the prodigal returned, he was set down at the table with his father; when Peter was restored, he was able to stand before the men of Israel and say, "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just"—the very thing which he had done himself, under the most aggravated circumstances. In all these cases, and many more which might be adduced, we see the perfectness of God's restoration. He always brings the soul back to Himself, in the full power of grace, and the full confidence of faith. "If thou wilt return, return *to Me*." "Abraham came unto the place where his tent had been at *the beginning*."

Then, as to the moral effect of divine restoration, it is most deeply practical. If legalism gets its answer in the *character* of the restoration, antinomianism gets its answer in the *effect* thereof. The restored soul will have a very deep and keen sense of the evil from which it has been delivered, and this will be evidenced by a jealous, prayerful, holy, and

circumspect spirit. We are not restored in order that we may the more lightly go and sin again, but rather that we may "go and sin no more." The deeper my sense of the *grace* of divine restoration, the deeper will be my sense of the *holiness* of it also. This principle is taught and established throughout all Scripture, but especially in two well-known passages, namely, Psalms xxiii. 3, and 1 John i. 9,—"He restoreth my soul: *He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness* for His name's sake." And, again, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to *cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" The proper path for a divinely-restored soul, is "the path of righteousness." In other words, having tasted divine grace, we walk in righteousness. To talk of grace while walking in unrighteousness, is, as the apostle says, to turn "the grace of our God into lasciviousness." If "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life," it also manifests itself in righteousness, in the outflow of that life. The grace that forgives us our sins, cleanses us from all unrighteousness. Those things must never be separated. When taken together, they furnish a triumphant answer to the legalism and antinomianism of the human heart.

But there was a deeper trial for Abraham's heart than even the famine, namely, that arising from the company of one who evidently was not walking in the energy of personal faith, nor in the realization of personal responsibility. It seems plain that Lot was, from the very beginning, borne onward rather

by Abraham's influence and example, than by his own faith in God. This is a very common case. If we look down along the history of the people of God, we can easily see how that in every great movement produced by the Spirit of God, certain individuals have attached themselves thereto who were not personally participators of the power which had produced the movement. Such persons go on for a time, either as a dead weight upon the testimony, or an active hindrance to it. Thus, in Abraham's case, the Lord called him to leave his kindred; but he brought his kindred with him. Terah retarded him in his movement, until death took him out of the way: Lot followed him somewhat further, until "the lusts of other things" overpowered him, and he entirely broke down.

The same thing is observable in the great movement of Israel out of Egypt. "A mixed multitude" followed them, and caused much defilement, weakness and sorrow; for we read, in Numbers xi, "The mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel *also* wept again, and said, 'Who shall give us flesh to eat.'" So, also, in the early days of the Church,—and not only so, but in every revival which has taken place therein down to the present day,—many have been acted upon by various influences, which, not being divine, proved evanescent; and the persons so acted upon, sooner or later gave way, and found their proper level. Nothing will endure but that which is of God. I must realize the link between me and the living God:

I must know myself as one called of Him into the position which I occupy, else I shall have no stability, and exhibit no consistency therein. It will not do to follow in the track of other people merely because it is their track. God will graciously give each a path to walk in, a sphere to move in, and a responsibility to fulfill; and we are bound to know our calling and the functions thereof, that, by His grace ministered to our souls daily, we may work therein effectually, to His glory. It matters not what our measure may be, provided it be what God hath dealt to us. We may have "five talents," or we may have but "one;" still, if we use the "one," with our eye fixed on the Master, we shall just be as sure to hear from His gracious lips the words, "Well done," as if we had used the "five." This is encouraging. Paul, Peter, James, and John had each his peculiar measure—his specific ministry; and so with all: none needs to interfere with another. A carpenter has a saw and a plane, a hammer and a chisel, and he uses each as he needs it. Nothing can be more worthless than imitation. If, in the natural world, we look at the various orders of creation, we see no imitation. All have their proper sphere, their proper functions. And if it be thus in the natural world, how much more in the spiritual. The field is wide enough for all. In every house there are vessels of various sizes and various shapes: the master wants them all.

Let us, therefore, my beloved reader, search and see whether we are walking under a divine or a hu-

man influence; whether our faith stands in the wisdom of man, or in the power of God; whether we are doing things because others have done them, or because the Lord has called us to do them; whether we are merely propped up by the example and influence of our fellow, or sustained by personal faith in God. These are serious inquiries. It is, no doubt, a happy privilege to enjoy the fellowship of our brethren; but if we are propped up by them, we shall soon make shipwreck. So also, if we go beyond our measure, our action will be strained and unsightly, uneasy and unnatural. It is very easy to see when a man is working in his place, and according to his measure. All affectation, assumption, and imitation is contemptible in the extreme. Hence, though we cannot be great, let us be honest; and though we cannot be brilliant, let us be genuine. If a person goes beyond his depth without knowing how to swim, he will surely flounder: if a vessel put out to sea without being sea-worthy and in trim, it will surely be beaten back into harbor, or lost. Lot left "Ur of the Chaldees," but he fell in the plains of Sodom. The call of God had not reached his heart, nor the inheritance of God filled his vision. Solemn thought! may we ponder it deeply! Blessed be God, there is a path for each of His servants, along which shines the light of His approving countenance, and to walk therein should be our chief joy. His approval is enough for the heart that knows Him. True, we may not always be able to command the approval and concurrence of our

brethren; we may frequently be misunderstood; but we cannot help these things. "The day" will set all this to rights, and the loyal heart can contentedly wait for that day, knowing that then "every man shall have praise of God."

But it may be well to examine more particularly what it was that caused Lot to turn aside off the path of public testimony. There is a crisis in every man's history, at which it will assuredly be made manifest on what ground he is resting, by what motives he is actuated, and by what objects he is animated. Thus it was with Lot. He did not die at Charran, but he fell at Sodom. The *ostensible* cause of his fall was the strife between his herdmen and those of Abraham; but the fact is, when one is not really walking with a single eye and purified affections, he will easily find a stone to stumble over. If he does not find it at one time, he will at another,—if he does not find it here, he will find it there. In one sense, it makes little matter as to what may be the apparent cause of turning aside; the *real* cause lies underneath, far away, it may be, from common observation, in the hidden chambers of the heart's affections and desires, where *the world*, in some shape or form, has been sought after. The strife between the herdmen might have been easily settled without spiritual damage to either Abraham or Lot. To the former, indeed, it only afforded an occasion for exhibiting the beautiful power of faith, and the moral elevation—the heavenly vantage-ground—on which faith ever sets the possessor thereof. But to

the latter, it was an occasion for exhibiting the thorough worldliness of his heart. The strife no more produced the worldliness in Lot than it produced the faith in Abraham; it only manifested, in the case of each, what was really there.

Thus it is always: controversies and divisions arise in the Church of God, and many are stumbled thereby, and driven back into the world in one way or another. They then lay the blame on the controversy and division, whereas the truth is, that these things were only the means of developing the real condition of the soul, and the bent of the heart. The world was in the heart, and *would be* reached by some *route* or another; nor is there much of moral excellency exhibited in blaming men and things, when the root of the matter lies within. It is not that controversy and division are not to be deeply deplored: assuredly they are. To see brethren contending, in the very presence of "the Canaanite and the Perizzite," is truly lamentable and humiliating. Our language should ever be, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, ... for we are brethren." Still, why did not Abraham make choice of Sodom?—why did not the strife drive him into the world? why was it not an occasion of stumbling to him? Because he looked at it from God's point of view. No doubt he had a heart that could be attracted by "well-watered plains" just as powerfully as Lot's heart, but then he did not allow his own heart to choose. He first let Lot take his choice, and then left God to choose

for him. This was heavenly wisdom. This is what faith ever does: it allows God to fix its inheritance, as it also allows Him to make it good. It is always satisfied with the portion which God gives. It can say, "The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." It matters not where "the lines" fall; for, in the judgment of faith, they always fall "in pleasant places," just because God casts them there.

The man of faith can easily afford to allow the man of sight to take his choice. He can say, "If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." What beautiful disinterestedness and moral elevation we have here! and yet what security! It is certain that, let nature range where it will, let it take its most comprehensive grasp—its boldest and highest flight, there is never the slightest danger of its laying its hand upon faith's treasure. It will seek its portion in quite an opposite direction. Faith lays up its treasure in a place which nature would never dream of examining; and as to its approaching thereto, it could not if it would, and it would not if it could. Hence, therefore, faith is perfectly safe, as well as beautifully disinterested, in allowing nature to take its choice.

What, then, did Lot choose, when he got his choice? He chose Sodom,—the very place that was about to be judged. But how was this? Why select such a spot? Because he looked at the outward appearance, and not at the intrinsic character and

future destiny. The intrinsic character was "*wicked*:" its future destiny was "*judgment*"—to be destroyed by "fire and brimstone out of heaven." But, it may be said, Lot knew nothing of all this. Perhaps not, nor Abraham either; but God did; and had Lot allowed God to "choose his inheritance for him," He certainly would not have chosen a spot that He Himself was about to destroy. He did not, however: he judged for himself. Sodom suited him, though it did not suit God. His eye rested on the "well-watered plains," and his heart was attracted by them. "He pitched his tent *toward* Sodom." Such is nature's choice! "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." Lot forsook Abraham for the same reason. He left the place of testimony, and got into the place of judgment.

"And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, 'Lift up thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward; for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever.'" The "strife" and "separation," so far from damaging Abraham's spiritual condition, rather brought out, in full relief, his heavenly principles, and strengthened, in his soul, the life of faith. Moreover, it cleared the prospect for him, and delivered him from the company of one who could only prove a dead weight. Thus it worked for good, and yielded a harvest of blessing. It is, at once, most solemn, and yet most encourag-

ing, to bear in mind that, in the long run, men find their proper level. Men who run unsent, break down, in one way or another, and find their way back to that which they profess to have left. On the other hand, those who are called of God, and lean on Him, are, by His grace, sustained. "Their path is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The thought of this should keep us humble, watchful, and prayerful. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," for, truly, "there are first that shall be last, and there are last that shall be first." "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved," is a principle which, whatever be its specific application, has a wide moral bearing. Many a vessel has sailed out of harbor in gallant style, with all its canvass spread, amid cheering and shouting, and with many fair promises of a first-rate passage; but, alas! storms, waves, shoals, rocks, and quicksands have changed the aspect of things; and the voyage that commenced with hope has ended in disaster. I am here only referring to the path of service and testimony, and by no means to the question of a man's eternal acceptance in Christ. This latter, blessed be God, does not, in any wise, rest with ourselves, but with Him who has said, "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." But do we not know that many Christians set out on some special course of service or testimony, under the impression that they are called of God thereto, and, after a time,

they break down? Unquestionably. And, further, very many set out in the profession of some special principle of action, respecting which they have not been divinely taught, or the consequences of which they have not maturely considered in the presence of God, and, as a necessary result, they themselves have been found, after a time, in the open violation of those very principles. All this is deplorable, and should be carefully avoided. It tends to weaken the faith of God's elect, and causes the enemies of the truth to speak reproachfully. Each one should receive his call and his commission directly from the Master Himself. All whom Christ calls into any special service, He will infallibly maintain therein, for He never sent any one a warfare at his own charges. But if we run unsent, we shall not only be left to *learn* our folly, but to *exhibit* it.

Yet, it is not that any one should set himself up as the impersonation of any principle, or as an example of any special character of service or testimony. God forbid. This would be the most egregious folly, and empty conceit. It is a teacher's business to set forth God's Word, and it is a servant's business to set forth the Master's will; but while all this is fully understood and admitted, we must ever remember the deep need there is of counting the cost ere we undertake to build a tower or go forth to war. Were this most seriously attended to, there would be far less confusion and failure in our midst. Abraham was called of God from Ur to Canaan, and hence God led him forth on

the way. When Abraham tarried at Charran, God waited for him; when he went down into Egypt, He restored him; when he needed guidance, He guided him; when there was a strife and a separation, He took care of him; so that Abraham had only to say, "Oh, how great is Thy goodness which *Thou hast laid up* for them that fear Thee, which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee, before the sons of men!" He lost nothing by the strife. He had his tent and his altar before, and he had his tent and his altar afterwards. "Then Abram removed *his tent*, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there *an altar* unto the Lord." Lot might choose Sodom; but as for Abraham, he sought and found his all in God. There was no altar in Sodom. Alas! all who travel in that direction are in quest of something quite different from that. It is never the worship of God, but the love of the world, that leads them thither. And even though they should attain their object, what is it?—how does it end? Just thus: "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls."

CHAPTER XIV

WE are here presented with a historic record of the revolt of five kings from under the hand of Chederlaomer, and a battle consequent thereon. The Spirit of God can occupy Himself with the movements of "kings and their armies," when such movements are in anywise connected with the people of God. In the present case, Abraham personally had nothing whatever to do with the revolt or its consequences. His "tent" and "altar" were not likely to furnish an occasion for the declaration of war, nor yet to be much affected by the outbreak or issue thereof. The proper portion of a heavenly man could never, by any possibility, tempt the cupidity nor excite the ambition of the kings and conquerors of this world.

However, although Abraham was not affected by the battle of "four kings with five," yet Lot was. His position was such as to involve him in the whole affair. So long as we are enabled, through grace, to pursue the path of simple faith, we shall be thrown completely outside the range of this world's circumstances; but if we abandon our high and holy position as those whose "citizenship is in heaven," and seek a name, a place, and a portion in the earth, we must expect to participate in earth's convulsions and vicissitudes. Lot had taken up his abode in the plains of Sodom, and was therefore deeply and sens-

ibly affected by the wars of Sodom. It must ever be thus. It is a bitter and a painful thing for the child of God to mingle himself with the children of this world. He can never do so without serious damage to his own soul, as well as to the testimony with which he is intrusted. What testimony was Lot in Sodom? A very feeble one indeed, if one at all. The very fact of his settling himself there was the death-blow to his testimony. To have spoken a word against Sodom and its ways, would have been to condemn himself, for why was he there? But, in truth, it does not by any means appear that to testify for God formed any part of his object in "pitching his tent toward Sodom." Personal and family interests seem to have been the leading springs of action in his heart; and though, as Peter tells us, "his righteous soul was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, from day to day," yet had he but little power to act against it, even if inclined so to do.

It is important, in a practical point of view, to see that we cannot be governed by two objects at the same time. For example, I cannot have before my mind, as objects, my worldly interests and the interests of the gospel of Christ. If I go to a town for the purpose of setting up in business, then, clearly, business is my object, and not the gospel. I may, no doubt, propose to myself both to attend to business and to preach the gospel as well; but, all the while, either one or the other must be my object. It is not that a servant of Christ may not most

blessedly and effectually preach the gospel and attend to business also; he assuredly may; but, in such a case, the gospel will be his object, and not business. Paul preached the gospel and made tents; but the gospel was his object, and not tent-making. If I make business my object, the gospel-preaching will speedily prove to be formal and unprofitable work; yea, it will be well if it be not made use of to sanctify my covetousness. The heart is very treacherous; and it is often truly astonishing to see how it deceives us when we desire to gain some special point. It will furnish, in abundance, the most plausible reasons; while the eyes of our understanding are so blinded by self-interest, or unjudged willfulness, as to be incapable of detecting their plausibility. How frequently do we hear persons defending a continuance in a position which they admit to be wrong, on the plea that they thereby enjoy a wider sphere of usefulness. To all such reasoning, Samuel furnishes a pointed and powerful reply,—"To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Which was able to do the more good? Abraham, or Lot? Does not the history of those two men prove, beyond a question, that the most effectual way to serve the world is to be faithful to it by separating from, and testifying against, it?

But be it remembered, that genuine separation from the world can only be the result of communion with God. I may seclude myself from the world, and constitute myself the centre of my being, like a

monk or a cynic; but separation to God is a totally different thing. The one chills and contracts, the other warms and expands. That drives us in upon ourselves; this draws us out in love and interest for others. That makes self and its interests our centre; this makes God and His glory our centre. Thus, in Abraham's case, we see that the very fact of his separation enabled him to render effectual service to one who had involved himself in trouble by his worldly ways. "When Abram heard that *his brother* was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan . . . . and he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people." Lot was Abraham's brother after all, and brotherly love must act. "A brother is born for adversity;" and it often happens that a season of adversity softens the heart, and renders it susceptible of kindness, even from one with whom we have had to part company; and it is remarkable that while in verse 12 we read, "They took Lot, *Abram's brother's son*," yet in verse 14 we read, "When Abram heard that *his brother* was taken captive." The claims of a brother's trouble are answered by the affections of a brother's heart. This is divine. Genuine faith, while it always renders us independent, never renders us indifferent;—it will never wrap itself up in its fleece while a brother shivers in the cold. There are three things which faith does,—it "purifies the heart," it "works

by love," and it "overcomes the world;" and all these results of faith are beautifully exhibited in Abraham on this occasion. His heart was purified from Sodom's pollutions; he manifested genuine love to Lot, his brother; and, finally, he was completely victorious over the kings. Such are the precious fruits of faith, that heavenly, Christ-honoring principle.

However, the man of faith is not exempt from the assaults of the enemy; and it frequently happens that immediately after a victory, one has to encounter a fresh temptation. Thus it was with Abraham. "The king of Sodom went out to meet him, after his return from the slaughter of Chederlaomer, and of the kings that were with him." There was evidently a very deep and insidious design of the enemy in this movement. "The king of Sodom" presents a very different thought, and exhibits a very different phase of the enemy's power, from what we have in "Chederlaomer and the kings that were with him." In the former, we have rather the hiss of the serpent; in the latter, the roar of the lion. But whether it were the serpent or the lion, the Lord's grace was amply sufficient; and most seasonably was this grace ministered to the Lord's servant, at the exact moment of need. "And Melchisedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine, and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, 'Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered

thine enemies into thy hand.'" We have here to remark, first, the peculiar point at which Melchisedek enters the scene; and, secondly, the double effect of his ministry. He did not come forth when Abraham was in pursuit of Chederlaomer, but when the king of Sodom was in pursuit of Abraham. This makes a great moral difference. A deeper character of communion was needed to meet the deeper character of conflict.

And then, as to the ministry, the "bread and wine" refreshed Abraham's spirit, after his conflict with Chederlaomer; while the benediction prepared his heart for his conflict with the king of Sodom. Abraham was a conqueror, and yet he was about to be a combatant, and the royal priest refreshed the conqueror's spirit, and fortified the combatant's heart.

It is peculiarly sweet to observe the manner in which Melchisedek introduces God to the thoughts of Abraham. He calls Him "the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth;" and not only so, but pronounces Abraham "blessed" of that same God. This was effectually preparing him for the king of Sodom. A man who was "blessed" of God did not need to take aught from the enemy; and if "the possessor of heaven and earth" filled his vision, "the goods" of Sodom could have but little attraction. Hence, as might be expected, when the king of Sodom made his proposal—"Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself," Abraham replies, "I have lift up my hand unto the Lord, the

most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich." Abraham refuses to be enriched by the king of Sodom. How could he think of delivering Lot from the power of the world if he himself were governed thereby? The only true way in which to deliver another is to be thoroughly delivered myself. So long as I am in the fire, it is quite impossible I can pluck another out of it. The path of separation is the path of power, as it is also the path of peace and blessedness.

The world, in all its various forms, is the great instrument of which Satan makes use in order to weaken the hands and alienate the affections of the servants of Christ. But, blessed be God, when the heart is true to Him, He always comes in to cheer, to strengthen, and to fortify at the right time. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro, throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him." (2 Chron. xvi. 9.) This is an encouraging truth for our poor, timid, doubting, faltering hearts. Christ will be our strength and shield. He will "cover our heads in the day of battle;" He will "teach our hands to war, and our fingers to fight;" and finally, "He will bruise Satan under our feet shortly." All this is unspeakably comforting to a heart sincerely desirous of making way against "the world, the flesh and the devil." May the Lord keep our hearts true

to Himself, in the midst of the ensnaring scene around us.

CHAPTER XV

"AFTER these things, the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, 'Fear not, Abram. I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.'" The Lord would not suffer His servant to be a loser, by rejecting the offers of the world. It was infinitely better for Abraham to find himself hidden behind Jehovah's shield than to take refuge beneath the patronage of the king of Sodom, and to be anticipating his "exceeding great reward" than to accept "the goods" of Sodom. The position into which Abraham is put, in the opening verse of our chapter, is beautifully expressive of the position into which every soul is introduced by the faith of Christ. Jehovah was his "shield," that he might rest in Him; Jehovah was his "reward," that he might wait for Him. So with the believer now: he finds his present rest, his present peace, his present security, all in Christ. No dart of the enemy can possibly penetrate the shield which covers the weakest believer in Jesus.

And then, as to the future, Christ fills it. Precious portion! Precious hope! A portion which can never be exhausted: a hope which will never make ashamed. Both are infallibly secured by the

counsels of God and the accomplished atonement of Christ. The present enjoyment thereof is by the ministry of the Holy Ghost, who dwells in us. This being the case, it is manifest that if the believer is pursuing a worldly career, or indulging in worldly or carnal desires, he cannot be enjoying either the "shield" or the "reward." If the Holy Ghost is grieved, He will not minister the enjoyment of that which is our proper portion—our proper hope. Hence, in the section of Abraham's history now before us, we see that when he had returned from the slaughter of the kings, and rejected the offer of the king of Sodom, Jehovah rose before his soul in the double character, as his "shield" and his "exceeding great reward." Let the heart ponder this, for it contains a volume of deeply practical truth. We shall now examine the remainder of this chapter.

In it we have unfolded to us the two great principles of sonship and heirship. "And Abram said, 'Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go *childless*, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?' And Abram said, 'Behold, to me Thou hast given no *seed:* and lo, one born in my house is mine *heir.*'" Abraham desired a son, for he knew, upon divine authority, that his "seed" should inherit the land. (Chap. xiii. 15.) Sonship and heirship are inseparably connected in the thoughts of God,—"He that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir." Sonship is the proper basis of everything; and, moreover, it is the result of God's sovereign counsel and operation,

as we read in James, "Of His own will begat He us." Finally, it is founded upon God's eternal principle of resurrection. How else could it be? Abraham's body was "dead;" wherefore, in his case, as in every other, sonship must be in the power of resurrection. Nature is dead, and can neither beget nor conceive aught for God. There lay the inheritance stretching out before the patriarch's eye, in all its magnificent dimensions; but where was the heir? Abraham's body and Sarah's womb alike answered "*death.*" But Jehovah is the God of resurrection, and therefore a "dead body" was the very thing for Him to act upon. Had nature not been dead, God should have put it to death ere He could fully show Himself. The most suitable theatre for the living God is that from which nature, with all its boasted powers and empty pretensions, has been totally expelled by the sentence of death. Wherefore, God's word to Abraham was, "'Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them;' and He said unto him, 'So shall thy seed be.'" When the God of resurrection fills the vision, there is no limit to the soul's blessing; for He who can quicken the dead, can do anything.

"And he believed in the Lord, and He counted it unto him for righteousness." The imputation of righteousness to Abraham is here founded upon his believing in the Lord as the Quickener of the dead. It is in this character that He reveals Himself in a world where death reigns; and when a soul believes in Him as such, it is counted righteous in His sight.

This necessarily shuts man out, as regards his co-operation, for what can he do in the midst of a scene of death? Can he raise the dead? Can he open the gates of the grave? Can he deliver himself from the power of death, and walk forth, in life and liberty, beyond the limits of its dreary domain? Assuredly not. Well, then, if he cannot do so, he cannot work out righteousness, nor establish himself in the relation of sonship. "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living," and therefore, so long as a man is under the power of death, and under the dominion of sin, he can neither know the position of a son, nor the condition of righteousness. Thus, God alone can bestow the adoption of sons, and He alone can impute righteousness, and both are connected with faith in Him as the One who raised up Christ from the dead.

It is in this way that the apostle handles the question of Abraham's faith, in Romans iv, where he says, "It was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed unto him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, *if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.*" Here, the God of resurrection is presented "to us also" as the object of faith, and our faith in Him as the alone ground of our righteousness. If Abraham had looked up into heaven's vault, spangled with innumerable stars, and then looked at "his own body now dead," how could he ever grasp the idea of a seed as numerous as those stars? Impossible. But he did not look at his own body, but at the resurrection-power of

God; and inasmuch as that was the power which was to produce the seed, we can easily see that the stars of heaven and the sand on the sea-shore are but feeble figures indeed; for what natural object could possibly illustrate the effect of that power which can raise the dead?

So also, when a sinner hearkens to the glad tidings of the gospel, were he to look up to the unsullied light of the divine presence, and then look down into the unexplored depths of his own evil nature, he might well exclaim, How can I ever get thither? —how can I ever be fit to dwell in that light? Where is the answer? In himself? Nay, blessed be God, but in that blessed One who traveled from the bosom to the cross and the grave, and from thence to the throne, thus filling up, in His Person and work, all the space between those extreme points. There can be nothing higher than the bosom of God—the eternal dwelling-place of the Son, and there can be nothing lower than the cross and the grave; but, amazing truth! I find Christ in both. I find Him in the bosom, and I find Him in the grave. He went down into death in order that He might leave behind Him, in the dust thereof, the full weight of His people's sins and iniquities. Christ in the grave exhibits the end of everything human—the end of sin—the full limit of Satan's power. The grave of Jesus forms the grand terminus of all. But resurrection takes us beyond this terminus, and constitutes the imperishable basis on which God's glory and man's blessing repose for-

ever. The moment the eye of faith rests on a risen Christ, there is a triumphant answer to every question as to sin, judgment, death, and the grave. The One who divinely met all these is alive from the dead, and has taken His seat at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens; and not only so, but the Spirit of that risen and glorified One, in the believer, constitutes him a son. He is quickened out of the grave of Christ: as we read, "And you, being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses." (Col. ii. 13.)

Hence, therefore, sonship, being founded on resurrection, stands connected with perfect justification—perfect righteousness—perfect freedom from everything which could in anywise be against us. God could not have us in His presence with sin upon us. He could not suffer a single speck or stain of sin upon His sons and daughters. The father could not have the prodigal at *his* table with the rags of the far country upon him. He could go forth to meet him in those rags, he could fall upon his neck and kiss him in those rags,—it was worthy and beautifully characteristic of his *grace* so to do; but then to seat him at his table in the rags would never do. The grace that brought the father out to the prodigal, reigns through the righteousness which brought the prodigal in to the father. It would not have been grace had the father waited for the son to deck himself in robes of his own providing, and it would not have been righteous to bring him in in his rags; but

both grace and righteousness shone forth in all their respective brightness and beauty when the father went out and fell on the prodigal's neck, but yet did not give him a seat at his table until he was clad and decked in a manner suited to that elevated and happy position. God, in Christ, has stooped to the very lowest point of man's moral condition, that, by stooping, He might raise man to the very highest point of blessedness, in fellowship with Himself. From all this, it follows, that our sonship, with all its consequent dignities and privileges, is entirely independent of us. We have just as little to do with it as Abraham's dead body and Sarah's dead womb had to do with a seed as numerous as the stars which garnish the heavens, or as the sand on the sea-shore. It is all of God. God the Father drew the plan, God the Son laid the foundation, and God the Holy Ghost raises the superstructure; and on this superstructure appears the inscription, "THROUGH GRACE, BY FAITH, WITHOUT WORKS OF LAW."

But then our chapter opens another most important subject to our view, namely, *heirship*. The question of sonship and righteousness being fully settled—divinely and unconditionally settled, the Lord said unto Abraham, "I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it." Here comes out the great question of heirship, and the peculiar path along which the chosen heirs are to travel ere they reach the promised inheritance. "If children, then heirs,

heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we *suffer* with Him, that we may be also glorified together." Our way to the kingdom lies through suffering, affliction and tribulation; but, thank God, we can, by faith, say, "the *sufferings* of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." And further, we know that "our *light affliction*, which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Finally, "we glory in *tribulation;* knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope." It is a high honor and a real privilege to be allowed to drink of our blessed Master's cup, and be baptized with His baptism,—to travel in blest companionship with Him along the road which leads directly to the glorious inheritance. The Heir and the joint-heirs reach that inheritance by the pathway of suffering.

But let it be remembered that the suffering of which the joint-heirs participate has no penal element in it. It is not suffering from the hand of infinite justice, because of sin; all that was fully met on the cross, when the divine victim bowed His sacred head beneath the stroke. "Christ also hath *once* suffered for sins," and that "once" was on the tree, and *nowhere else.* He never suffered for sins before, and He never can suffer for sins again. "*Once*, in the end of the world (the end of all flesh), hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." "Christ was *once* offered."

There are two ways in which to view a suffering Christ,—first, as bruised of Jehovah; secondly, as rejected of men. In the former, He stood alone; in the latter, we have the honor of being associated with Him. In the former, I say, He stood alone, for who could have stood with Him? He bore the wrath of God alone; He traveled in solitude down into "the rough valley that had neither been eared nor sown," and there He settled forever the question of our sins. *With* this we had nothing to do, though *to* this we are eternally indebted for everything. He fought the fight and gained the victory alone, but He divides the spoils with us. He was in solitude "in the horrible pit and miry clay;" but directly He planted His foot on the everlasting "rock" of resurrection, He associates us with Him. He uttered the *cry* alone; He sings the "*new song*" in company. (Psalm xl. 2, 3.)

Now the question is, shall we refuse to suffer from the hand of man *with Him* who suffered from the hand of God *for us?* That it is, in a certain sense, a question, is evident, from the Spirit's constant use of the word "if," in connection with it.—"If so be we suffer with Him."—"If we suffer, we shall reign." There is no such question as to sonship. We do not reach the high dignity of sons through suffering, but through the quickening power of the Holy Ghost, founded on the accomplished work of Christ, according to God's eternal counsel. This can never be touched. We do not reach the *family* through suffering. The apostle does not say, That

ye may be counted worthy of the *family* of God for which ye also suffer. They were in the family already; but they were bound for the kingdom, and their road to that kingdom lay through suffering; and not only so, but the measure of suffering for the kingdom would be according to their devotedness and conformity to the King. The more like we are *to* Him, the more we shall suffer *with* Him; and the deeper our fellowship with Him in the suffering, the deeper will be our fellowship in the glory. There is a difference between the *house* of the Father and the kingdom of the Son: in the former, it will be a question of capacity; in the latter, a question of assigned position. All my children may be around my table, but their enjoyment of my company and conversation will entirely depend on their capacity. One may be seated on my knee, in the full enjoyment of his relationship, as a child, yet perfectly unable to comprehend a word I say; another may exhibit uncommon intelligence in conversation, yet not be a whit happier in his relationship than the infant on my knee. But when it becomes a question of service for me, or public identification with me, it is evidently quite another thing. This is but a feeble illustration of the idea of capacity in the Father's house, and assigned position in the kingdom of the Son.

But let it be remembered that our suffering with Christ is not a yoke of bondage, but a matter of privilege; not an iron rule, but a gracious gift; not constrained servitude, but voluntary devotedness.

"Unto you *it is given*, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." (Phil. i. 29.) Moreover, there can be little doubt but that the real secret of suffering for Christ is to have the heart's affections centred in Him. The more I love Jesus, the closer I shall walk with Him, and the closer I walk with Him, the more faithfully I shall imitate Him, and the more faithfully I imitate Him, the more I shall suffer with Him. Thus it all flows from love to Christ; and then it is a fundamental truth that "we love Him because He first loved us." In this, as in everything else, let us beware of a legal spirit; for it must not be imagined that a man with the yoke of legality round his neck is suffering for Christ; alas! it is much to be feared that such an one does not know Christ, does not know the blessedness of sonship, has not yet been established in grace, is rather seeking to reach the family by works of law than to reach the kingdom by the path of suffering.

On the other hand, let us see that we are not shrinking from our Master's cup and baptism. Let us not profess to enjoy the benefits which His cross secures, while we refuse the rejection which that cross involves. We may rest assured that the road to the kingdom is not enlightened by the sunshine of this world's favor, nor strewed with the roses of its prosperity. If a Christian is advancing in the world, he has much reason to apprehend that he is not walking in company with Christ. "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there

shall also My servant be." What was the goal of Christ's earthly career? Was it an elevated, influential position in this world? By no means. What then? He found His place on the cross, between two condemned malefactors. But, it will be said, God was in this. True; yet man was in it likewise; and this latter truth is what must inevitably secure our rejection by the world, if only we keep in company with Christ. The companionship of Christ, which lets me into heaven, casts me out of earth; and to talk of the former, while I am ignorant of the latter, proves there is something wrong. If Christ were on earth now, what would His path be? whither would it tend? where would it terminate? Would we like to walk with Him? Let us answer those inquiries under the edge of the Word, and under the eye of the Almighty; and may the Holy Ghost make us faithful to an absent, a rejected, a crucified Master. The man who walks in the Spirit will be filled with Christ; and, being filled with Him, he will not be occupied with suffering, but with Him for whom he suffers. If the eye is fixed on Christ, the suffering will be as nothing in comparison with the present joy and future glory.

The subject of heirship has led me much further than I intended; but I do not regret it, as it is of considerable importance. Let us now briefly glance at the deeply significant vision of Abraham as set forth in the closing verses of our chapter. "And *when the sun was going down*, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, a horror of great darkness fell

upon him. And He said unto Abram, 'Know of a surety, that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. . . . . .' And it came to pass, that, *when the sun went down*, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces."

The entire of Israel's history is summed up in those two figures—the "furnace" and the "lamp." The former presents to us those periods of their history in which they were brought into suffering and trial; such, for example, as the long period of Egyptian bondage, their subjection to the kings of Canaan, the Babylonish captivity, their present dispersed and degraded condition. During all these periods they may be considered as passing through the smoking furnace. (See Deut. iv. 20; 1 Kings viii. 51; Isaiah xlviii. 10.)

Then, in the burning lamp, we have those points in Israel's eventful history at which Jehovah graciously appeared for their relief, such as, their deliverance from Egypt by the hand of Moses, their deliverance from under the power of the kings of Canaan by the ministry of the various judges, their return from Babylon by the decree of Cyrus, and their final deliverance when Christ shall appear in His glory. The inheritance must be reached through the furnace: and the darker the smoke of the fur-

nace, the brighter and more cheering will be the lamp of God's salvation.

Nor is this principle confined merely to the people of God as a whole, it applies just as fully to individuals. All who have ever reached a position of eminence as *servants*, have endured the furnace before they enjoyed the lamp. "A horror of great darkness" passed across the spirit of Abraham: Jacob had to endure twenty-one years of sore hardship in the house of Laban: Joseph found his furnace of affliction in the dungeons of Egypt: Moses spent forty years in the desert. Thus it must be with all God's *servants*. They must be "tried" first, that, being found "faithful," they may be "put into the ministry." God's principle, in reference to those who serve Him, is expressed in those words of St. Paul, "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." (1 Tim. iii. 6.)

It is one thing to be *a child of God;* it is quite another to be *a servant of Christ.* I may love my child very much, yet, if I set him to work in my garden, he may do more harm than good. Why? Is it because he is not a dear child? No; but because he is not a practiced servant. This makes all the difference. Relationship and office are distinct things. Not one of the Queen's children is at present capable of being her prime minister. It is not that all God's children have not something to do, something to suffer, something to learn. Undoubtedly they have; yet it ever holds good, that *public*

service and *private discipline* are intimately connected in the ways of God. One who comes forward much in public will need that chastened spirit, that matured judgment, that subdued and mortified mind, that broken will, that mellow tone, which are the sure and beautiful result of God's secret discipline; and it will generally be found that those who take a prominent place without more or less of the above moral qualifications, will sooner or later break down.

Lord Jesus, keep Thy feeble servants very near unto Thine own most blessed Person, and in the hollow of Thine hand!

CHAPTER XVI

HERE we find unbelief casting its dark shadow across the spirit of Abraham, and again turning him aside, for a season, from the path of simple, happy confidence in God. "And Sarai said unto Abram, 'Behold the Lord hath restrained me from bearing.'" These words bespeak the usual impatience of unbelief; and Abraham should have treated them accordingly, and waited patiently on the Lord for the accomplishment of His gracious promise. The poor heart naturally prefers anything to the attitude of *waiting*. It will turn to any expedient, any scheme, any resource, rather than be kept in that posture. It is one thing to believe a promise at the first, and quite another thing to wait

quietly for the accomplishment thereof. We can see this distinction constantly exemplified in a child. If I promise my child anything, he has no idea of doubting my word; but yet I can detect the greatest possible restlessness and impatience in reference to the time and manner of accomplishment. And cannot the wisest sage find a true mirror in which to see himself reflected, in the conduct of a child? Truly so. Abraham exhibits faith in chapter xv, and yet he fails in patience in chapter xvi. Hence the force and beauty of the apostle's word in Hebrews vi,—"Followers of them who through *faith and patience* inherit the promises." God makes a promise; faith believes it, hope anticipates it, patience *waits* quietly for it.

There is such a thing, in the commercial world, as "the present worth" of a bill or promissory note; for if men are called upon to wait for their money, they must be paid for waiting. Now, in faith's world there is such a thing as the *present* worth of God's promise; and the scale by which that worth is regulated, is the heart's experimental knowledge of God; for according to my estimate of God, will be my estimate of His promise; and, moreover, the subdued and patient spirit finds its rich and full reward in waiting upon Him for the accomplishment of all that He has promised.

However, as to Sarah, the real amount of her word to Abraham is this: The Lord has failed me; it may be, my Egyptian maid will prove a resource for me. Anything but God for a heart under the

influence of unbelief. It is often truly marvelous to observe the trifles to which we will betake ourselves when once we have lost the sense of God's nearness, His infallible faithfulness and unfailing sufficiency. We lose that calm and well-balanced condition of soul so essential to the proper testimony of the man of faith, and, just like other people, betake ourselves to any or every expedient in order to reach the wished-for end, and call that "a laudable use of means."

But it is a bitter thing to take ourselves out of the place of absolute dependence upon God: the consequences must be disastrous. Had Sarah said, Nature has failed me, but God is my resource, how different it would have been! This would have been her proper ground, for nature really had failed her. But then it was nature in one shape, and therefore she wished to try nature in another. She had not learnt to look away from nature in every shape. In the judgment of God and of faith, nature in Hagar was no better than nature in Sarah. Nature whether old or young is alike to God, and, therefore, alike to faith; but, ah! we are only in the power of this truth when we are experimentally finding our living centre in God Himself. When the eye is taken off that glorious Being, we are ready for the meanest device of unbelief. It is only when we are consciously leaning on the only true, the only wise, the living God, that we are enabled to look away from every creature stream. It is not that we shall despise God's instrumentality. By no means. To do

so would be recklessness and not faith. Faith values the instrument, not because of itself, but because of Him who uses it. Unbelief looks only at the instrument, and judges of the success of a matter by the apparent efficiency thereof, instead of by the sufficiency of Him who, in grace, uses it. Like Saul, who, when he looked at David and then looked at the Philistine, said, "Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for thou art but a youth." Yet the question in David's heart was not as to whether he was able, but whether Jehovah was able.

The path of faith is a very simple and a very narrow one. It neither deifies the means on the one hand, nor despises it on the other; it simply values it so far as it is evidently God's means, and no further. There is a vast difference between God's using the creature to minister to me, and my using it to shut Him out. This difference is not sufficiently attended to. God used the ravens to minister to Elijah, but Elijah did not use them to exclude God. If the heart be really trusting in God, it will not trouble itself about His means. It waits on Him, in the sweet assurance that by what means soever He pleases, He will bless, He will minister, He will provide.

Now, in the case before us in this chapter, it is evident that Hagar was not God's instrument for the accomplishment of His promise to Abraham. He had promised a son, no doubt, but He had not said that this son should be Hagar's; and, in point of

fact, we find, from the narrative, that both Abraham and Sarah "multiplied their sorrow" by having recourse to Hagar; for "when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes." This was but the beginning of those multiplied sorrows, which flowed from hastening after nature's resources. Sarah's dignity was trampled down by an Egyptian bondwoman, and she found herself in the place of weakness and contempt. The only true place of dignity and power is the place of felt weakness and dependence. There is no one so entirely independent of all around as the man who is really walking by faith, and waiting only upon God; but the moment a child of God makes himself a debtor to nature or the world, he loses his dignity, and will speedily be made to feel his loss. It is no easy task to estimate the loss sustained by diverging, in the smallest measure, from the path of faith. No doubt, all those who walk in that path will find trial and exercise; but one thing is certain, that the blessings and joys which peculiarly belong to them are infinitely more than a counterpoise; whereas, when they turn aside, they have to encounter far deeper trial, and naught but that.

"And Sarai said, 'My wrong be *upon thee.*'" When we act wrong, we are ofttimes prone to lay the blame on some one else. Sarah was only reaping the fruit of her own proposal, and yet she says to Abraham, "My wrong be upon thee;" and then, with Abraham's permission, she seeks to get rid of the trial which her own impatience had brought upon

her. "But Abram said unto Sarai, 'Behold thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee.' And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face." This will not do. "The bondwoman" cannot be got rid of by hard treatment. When we make mistakes, and find ourselves called upon to encounter the results thereof, we cannot counteract those results by carrying ourselves with a high hand. We frequently try this method, but we are sure to make matters worse thereby. If we have done wrong, we should humble ourselves and confess the wrong, and wait on God for deliverance. But there was nothing like this manifested in Sarah's case. Quite the reverse. There is no sense of having done wrong; and, so far from waiting on God for deliverance, she seeks to deliver herself in her own way. However, it will always be found that every effort which we make to rectify our errors, previous to the full confession thereof, only tends to render our path more difficult. Thus Hagar had to return, and give birth to her son, which son proved to be not the child of promise at all, but a very great trial to Abraham and his house, as we shall see in the sequel.

Now, we should view all this in a double aspect: first, as teaching us a direct practical principle of much value; and secondly, in a doctrinal point of view. And, first, as to the direct, practical teaching, we may learn that when, through the unbelief of our hearts, we make mistakes, it is not all in a moment, nor yet by our own devices, we can remedy them. Things must take their course. "Whatso-

ever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." This is an unalterable principle, meeting us again and again on the page of inspiration, and also on the page of our personal history. Grace forgives the sin and restores the soul, but that which is sown must be reaped. Abraham and Sarah had to endure the presence of the bondwoman and her son for a number of years, and then get rid of them in God's way. There is peculiar blessedness in leaving ourselves in God's hands. Had Abraham and Sarah done so, on the present occasion, they would never have been troubled with the presence of the bondwoman and her son; but, having made themselves debtors to nature, they had to endure the consequences. But, alas! we are often "like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke," when it would be our exceeding comfort to "behave and quiet ourselves as a child that is weaned of his mother." No two figures can be more opposite than a stubborn bullock and a weaned child. The former represents a person senselessly struggling under the yoke of circumstances, and rendering his yoke all the more galling by his efforts to get rid of it; the latter represents one meekly bowing his head to everything, and rendering his portion all the sweeter by entire subjection of spirit.

And now as to the doctrinal view of this chapter. We are authorized to look at Hagar and her son as figures of the covenant of works, and all who are

thereby brought into bondage. (See Gal. iv. 22–25.) "The flesh" is, in this important passage, contrasted with "promise;" and thus we not only get the divine idea as to what the term "flesh" implies, but also as to Abraham's effort to obtain the seed by means of Hagar, instead of resting in God's "promise." The two covenants are allegorized by Hagar and Sarah, and are diametrically opposite the one to the other. The one gendering to bondage, inasmuch as it raised the question as to man's competency "to do" and "not to do," and made life entirely dependent upon that competency. "The man that doeth these things shall live in them." This was the Hagar-covenant. But the Sarah-covenant reveals God as the God of promise, which promise is entirely independent of man, and founded upon God's willingness and ability to fulfill it. When God makes a promise, there is no "if" attached thereto. He makes it unconditionally, and is resolved to fulfill it; and faith rests in Him, in perfect liberty of heart. It needs no effort of nature to reach the accomplishment of a divine promise. Here was precisely where Abraham and Sarah failed. They made an effort of nature to reach a certain end, which end was absolutely secured by a promise of God. This is the grand mistake of unbelief. By its restless activity, it raises a hazy mist around the soul, which hinders the beams of the divine glory from reaching it. "He could there do no mighty works, because of their unbelief." One great characteristic virtue of faith is, that it ever leaves the platform clear for God to show

Himself; and truly, when He shows Himself, man must take the place of a happy worshiper.

The error into which the Galatians allowed themselves to be drawn, was the addition of something of nature to what Christ had already accomplished for them by the cross. The gospel which had been preached to them, and which they had received, was the simple presentation of God's absolute, unqualified and unconditional grace. "Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth crucified among them." This was not merely promise divinely made, but promise divinely and most gloriously accomplished. A crucified Christ settled everything, in reference both to God's claims and man's necessities. But the false teachers upset all this, or sought to upset it, by saying, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." This, as the apostle teaches them, was, in reality, "making Christ of none effect." Christ must either be a *whole* Saviour, or *no* Saviour at all. The moment a man says, Except *ye* be this or that, ye cannot be saved, he totally subverts Christianity; for in Christianity I find God coming down to me, *just as I am* —a lost, guilty, self-destroyed sinner; and coming, moreover, with a full remission of *all* my sins, and a full salvation from my lost estate, all perfectly wrought by Himself on the cross.

Hence, therefore, a man who tells me, You must be so and so, in order to be saved, robs the cross of all its glory, and robs me of all my peace. If salvation depends upon *our* being or doing aught, we

shall inevitably be lost. Thank God, it does not; for the great fundamental principle of the gospel is, that God is ALL: man is NOTHING. It is not a mixture of God and man,—it is all of God. The peace of the gospel does not repose in part on Christ's work and in part on man's work; it reposes *wholly* on Christ's work, because that work is perfect —perfect forever; and it renders all who put their trust in it as perfect as itself.

Under the law, God, as it were, stood still to see what man could do; but in the gospel, God is seen acting, and as for man, he has but to "stand still and see the salvation of God." This being so, the inspired apostle hesitates not to say to the Galatians, "Christ is become of no effect unto you; whosoever of you are justified by law [εν νομω], ye are fallen from grace." If man has anything to do in the matter, God is shut out; and if God is shut out, there can be no salvation, for it is impossible that man can work out a salvation by that which proves him a lost creature; and then if it be a question of *grace*, it must be all grace. It cannot be half grace, half law. The two covenants are perfectly distinct. It cannot be half Sarah and half Hagar: it must be either the one or the other. If it be Hagar, God has nothing to do with it; and if it be Sarah, man has nothing to do with it. Thus it stands throughout. The law addresses man, tests him, sees what he is really worth, proves him a ruin, and puts him under the curse; and not only puts him under it, but keeps him there, so long as he is occupied with it—so long

as he is alive. "The law hath dominion over a man so long as he liveth;" but when he is dead, its dominion necessarily ceases, so far as he is concerned though it still remains in full force to curse every *living* man.

The gospel, on the contrary, assuming man to be lost, ruined, dead, reveals God as He is—the Saviour of the lost, the Pardoner of the guilty, the Quickener of the dead. It reveals Him, not as exacting aught from man, (for what could be expected from one who has died a bankrupt?) but as exhibiting His own independent grace in redemption. This makes a material difference, and will account for the extraordinary strength of the language employed in the epistle to the Galatians,—"I marvel,"—"Who hath bewitched you?"—"I am afraid of you,"—"I stand in doubt of you,"—"I would they were even cut off that trouble you." This is the language of the Holy Ghost, who knows the value of a full Christ and a full salvation, and who also knows how essential the knowledge of both is to a lost sinner. We have no such language as this in any other epistle, not even in that to the Corinthians, although there were some of the grossest disorders to be corrected amongst them. All human failure and error can be corrected by bringing in God's grace; but the Galatians, like Abraham in this chapter, were going away from God and returning to the flesh. What remedy could be devised for this? How can you correct an error which consists in departing from that which alone can correct anything? To fall from grace is

to get back under the law, from which nothing can ever be reaped but "THE CURSE." May the Lord establish our hearts in His own most excellent grace!

CHAPTER XVII

HERE we have God's remedy for Abraham's failure set before us. "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said unto him, '*I am the Almighty God:* walk before *Me*, and be thou *perfect*.'"* This is a

*I would here offer a remark as to the word "perfect." When Abraham was called upon to be "perfect," it did not mean perfect in himself; for this he never was, and never could be. It simply meant that he should be perfect as regards the object before his heart—that his hopes and expectations were to be perfectly and undividedly centred in the "Almighty God."

In looking through the New Testament, we find the word "perfect" used in at least four distinct senses. In Matt. v. 48 we read, "Be ye therefore *perfect*, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Here we learn from the context that the word "perfect" refers to the principle of our walk. At verse 44 we read, "Love your enemies, ... that ye may be the sons of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh the sun to rise upon the evil and the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust." Hence, to be "perfect" in the sense of Matt. v. 48 is to act on a principle of grace toward all, even toward those who are injurious and hostile. A Christian going to law, and asserting or contending for his rights, is not "perfect as his Father;" for his Father is dealing in *grace*, whereas he is dealing in *righteousness*.

The question here is not as to the right or wrong of going to law with worldly people (as to brethren, 1 Cor. vi is conclusive). All I contend for is, that a Christian so doing is acting in a character the direct opposite to that of his Father; for assuredly He is not going to law with the world. He is not now on a judgment-seat, but on a mercy-seat—a throne of grace. He showers His blessings upon

most comprehensive verse. It is very evident that Abraham had not been walking before the Almighty God when he adopted Sarah's expedient in reference to Hagar. It is faith alone that can enable a man to walk up and down before an Almighty One. Unbelief will ever be thrusting in something of self, something of circumstances, second causes, and the like, and thus the soul is robbed of the joy and peace, the calm elevation and holy independence, which flow from leaning upon the arm of One who can do everything. I believe we deeply need to ponder

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those who, were He to go to law with them, should be in hell. Wherefore it is plain that a Christian, when he brings a man before the judgment-seat, is not "perfect as his Father which is in heaven is perfect."

At the close of Matt. xviii we have a parable which teaches us that a man who asserts his rights is ignorant of the true character and proper effect of grace. The servant was not *unrighteous* in demanding what was due to him, but he was *ungracious*. He was totally unlike his master. He had been forgiven ten thousand talents, and yet he could seize his fellow by the throat for a paltry hundred pence. What was the consequence? He was delivered to the tormentors. He lost the happy sense of *grace*, and was left to reap the bitter fruits of having asserted his *rights*, while being himself a subject of *grace*. And, observe further, he was called a "*wicked* servant," not because of having owed "ten thousand talents," but because of not having forgiven the "hundred pence." *The master* had ample grace to settle the former, but *he* had not grace to settle the latter. This parable has a solemn voice for all Christians going to law; for although, in the application of it, it is said, "So shall My heavenly Father do to you, if you, from your heart, forgive not every one *his brother* their trespasses," yet is the principle of general application, that a man acting in righteousness will lose *the sense* of grace.

In Hebrews ix we have another sense of the term "perfect." Here, too, the context settles the import of the word. It is "perfect, as pertaining to the conscience." This is a deeply important use of the term. The worshiper under the law never could have a perfect conscience, for the simplest reason possible, because he

this. God is not such an abiding reality to our souls as He ought to be, or as He would be, were we walking in more simple faith and dependence.

"Walk before *Me*." This is true power. To walk thus, implies our having nothing whatever before our hearts save God Himself. If I am founding my expectation upon men and things, I am not walking before God, but before men and things. It is of the utmost importance to ascertain who or what I have before me as an object. To what am I looking? On whom or what am I leaning, at this

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never had a perfect sacrifice. The blood of a bullock and a goat did well enough *for a time*, but it could not do *forever*, and therefore could not give a perfect conscience. Now, however, the weakest believer in Jesus is privileged to have a perfect conscience. Why? Is it because he is a *better man* than the worshiper under the law? Nay; but because he has gotten *a better sacrifice*. If Christ's sacrifice is perfect forever, the believer's conscience is perfect forever. The two things necessarily go together. For the Christian not to have a perfect conscience is a dishonor to the sacrifice of Christ. It is tantamount to saying that His sacrifice is only temporary, and not eternal, in its effect; and what is this but to bring it down to the level of the sacrifices under the Mosaic economy.

It is very needful to distinguish between perfection in the flesh and perfection as to conscience. To pretend to the former, is to exalt *self;* to refuse the latter, is to dishonor Christ. The babe in Christ should have a perfect conscience; whereas St. Paul had not, nor could have, perfect flesh. The flesh is not presented in the Word as a thing which is to be perfected, but as a thing which has been crucified. This makes a wide difference. The Christian has sin *in* him, but not *on* him. Why? Because Christ, who had no sin *in* Him ever, had sin *on* Him when He was nailed to the cross.

Finally, in Phil. iii we have two other senses of the word "perfect." The apostle says, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already *perfect;*" and yet a little further on he says, "Let as many as be *perfect* be thus minded." The former refers to the apostle's full and everlasting conformity to Christ in glory: the latter refers to our having Christ as the all-engrossing object before the heart's affections.

moment? Does God *entirely* fill my future? Have men or circumstances aught to do therein? Is there any space allotted to the creature? The only way in which to get above the world is to walk by faith, because faith so completely fills the scene with God that there is no room for the creature—no room for the world. If God fills up my entire range of vision, I can see nothing else; and then I am able to say, with the Psalmist, "My soul, wait thou *only* upon God; for my expectation is from Him. He *only* is my rock and my salvation: He is my defence, I shall not be moved." (Ps. lxii. 5, 6.) This word "only" is deeply searching. Nature cannot say this. Not that it will, save when under the direct influence of a daring and blasphemous scepticism, formally shut out God altogether; but it assuredly cannot say, "*He only.*"

Now, it is well to see that as in the matter of salvation, so in all the details of actual life from day to day, God will not share His glory with the creature. From first to last, it must be "He only," and this, too, in reality. It will not do to have the language of dependence upon God on our lips, while our hearts are really leaning on some creature resource. God will make all this fully manifest; He will test the heart; He will put faith into the furnace. "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect." Thus it is we reach the proper point. When the soul is enabled, by grace, to get rid of all its fondly-cherished creature expectations, then, and only then, it is prepared to let God act; and when He acts, all must be well.

He will not leave anything undone. He will perfectly settle everything on behalf of those who simply put their trust in Him. When unerring wisdom, omnipotent power, and infinite love combine, the confiding heart may enjoy unruffled repose. Unless we can find some circumstance too big or too little for "the Almighty God," we have no proper base on which to found a single anxious thought. This is an amazing truth, and one eminently calculated to put all who believe it into the blessed position in which we find Abraham in this chapter. When God had, in effect, said to him, Leave *all* to Me, and I will settle it for you, beyond your utmost desires and expectations: the seed and the inheritance, and everything pertaining thereto, will be fully and everlastingly settled, according to the covenant of the Almighty God,—then "*Abram fell on his face.*" Truly blessed attitude! the only proper one for a thoroughly empty, feeble, and unprofitable sinner to occupy in the presence of the living God—the Creator of heaven and earth—the Possessor of all things —"the Almighty God."

"And God talked with him." It is when man is in the dust that God can talk to him in grace. Abraham's posture here is the beautiful expression of entire prostration, in the presence of God, in the sense of utter weakness and nothingness. And this, be it observed, is the sure precursor of God's revelation of Himself. It is when the creature is laid low that God can show Himself in the unclouded effulgence of what He is. He will not give His glory

to another. He can reveal Himself, and allow man to worship in view of that revelation; but until the sinner takes his proper place, there can be no unfolding of the divine character. How different is Abraham's attitude in this and the preceding chapter! There, he had nature before him; here, he has the Almighty God: there, he is an actor; here, he is a worshiper: there, he was betaking himself to his own and Sarah's contrivance; here, he leaves himself and his circumstances, his present and his future, in God's hands, and allows Him to act in him, for him and through him. Hence God can say, "I will make,"—"I will establish,"—"I will give,"—"I will bless." In a word, it is all God and His actings; and this is real rest for the poor heart that has learnt anything of itself.

The covenant of circumcision is now introduced. Every member of the household of faith must bear in his body the seal of that covenant. There must be no exception. "He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and My covenant shall be in your flesh, for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man-child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people, he hath broken My covenant." We are taught, in Romans iv, that circumcision was "a seal of the righteousness of faith." "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Being thus counted righteous, God set His "seal" upon him

The seal with which the believer is now sealed is not a mark in the flesh, but "that Holy Spirit of promise, whereby he is sealed unto the day of redemption." This is founded upon his everlasting connection with Christ, and his perfect identification with Him, in death and resurrection; as we read, in Colossians, "And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power: in whom also ye are *circumcised* with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses." This is a most glorious passage, unfolding to us the true idea of what circumcision was meant to typify. Every believer belongs to "the circumcision" in virtue of his living association with Him who, by His cross, has forever abolished everything that stood in the way of His Church's perfect justification. There was not a speck of sin on the conscience, nor a principle of sin in the nature of His people, for which Christ was not judged on the cross; and they are now looked upon as having died with Christ, lain in the grave with Christ, been raised with Christ, perfectly accepted in Him,—their sins, their iniquities, their transgressions, their enmity, their uncircumcision, having been entirely put away by the cross. The

sentence of death has been written on the flesh; but the believer is in possession of a new life, in union with his risen Head in glory.

The apostle, in the above passage, teaches that the Church was quickened out of the grave of Christ; and, moreover, that the forgiveness of all her trespasses is as complete, and as entirely the work of God, as was the raising of Christ from the dead; and this latter, we know, was the result of "God's mighty power," or, as it may be rendered, "according to the energy of the might of His power" (Eph. i. 19.)—a truly wonderful expression, calculated to set forth the magnitude and glory of redemption, as well as the solid basis on which it rests.

What rest—perfect rest—for the heart and conscience is here! What full relief for the burdened spirit! *All* our sins buried in the grave of Christ,—not one—even the smallest—left out! God did this for us! All that His searching eye could detect in us, He laid on the head of Christ when He hung upon the cross! He judged Him there and then, instead of judging us in hell forever! Precious fruit, this, of the admirable, the profound, the eternal counsels of redeeming love! And we are "sealed," not with a certain mark cut in our flesh, but with the Holy Ghost. The entire household of faith is sealed thus. Such is the dignity, the value, the changeless efficacy of the blood of Christ, that the Holy Ghost—the Third Person of the eternal Trinity—can take up His abode in all those who have put their trust therein.

And now what remains for those who know these things, save to "be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Thus may it be, O Lord, through the grace of Thy Holy Spirit!

CHAPTER XVIII

THIS chapter affords a beautiful exemplification of the results of an obedient, separated walk. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." (Rev. iii. 20.) Again, we read, "Jesus answered and said unto him, 'If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him.'" (John xiv. 23.) From these passages, taken in connection with our chapter, we learn that an obedient soul enjoys a character of communion entirely unknown to one who moves in a worldly atmosphere.

This does not touch, in the most remote manner, the question of forgiveness or justification. All believers are clothed in the same spotless robe of righteousness,—all stand in one common justification, under the eye of God. The one life flows down from the Head in heaven through all the members on earth. This is plain. The doctrine in reference to the above important points is fully established in the Word, and has been again and again unfolded

through the foregoing pages of this volume. But we should remember that justification is one thing, and the fruit thereof quite another: to be a child is one thing, to be an obedient child is quite another. Now, a father loves an obedient child, and will make such a child more the depositary of his thoughts and plans. And is this not true in reference to our heavenly Father? Unquestionably. John xiv. 23 puts this quite beyond dispute; and, moreover, it proves that for one to speak of loving Christ, and not to "keep His words," is hypocrisy. "If a man love Me, he will keep My words." Hence, if we are not keeping Christ's words, it is a sure proof we are not walking in the love of His name. Love to Christ is proved by doing the things which He commands, and not by merely saying, "Lord, Lord." It is of very little avail to say, "I go, sir," while the heart has no idea of going.

However, in Abraham we see one who, however he may have failed in detail, was nevertheless characterized in the main by a close, simple and elevated walk with God; and in the interesting section of his history now before us, we find him in the enjoyment of three special privileges, namely, providing refreshment *for* the Lord, enjoying full communion *with* the Lord, and interceding for others *before* the Lord. These are high distinctions; and yet are they only such as ever result from an obedient, separated, holy walk. Obedience refreshes the Lord, as being the fruit of His own grace in our hearts. We see in the only perfect Man that ever lived, how

He constantly refreshed and delighted the Father. Again and again God bore testimony to Him from heaven, as His "beloved Son," in whom He was "well pleased." The path of Christ furnished a continual feast to heaven. His ways were ever sending up a fragrant incense to the throne of God. From the manger to the cross, He did always the things which pleased His Father. There was no interruption, no variation, no salient point. He was the only perfect One.—

"There only can the Spirit trace
A perfect life below."

Here and there, as we look along the current of inspiration, we find one and another who occasionally refreshed the mind of heaven. Thus, in the chapter before us, we find the tent of the stranger at Mamre affording refreshment to the Lord Himself,—refreshment lovingly offered, and willingly accepted. (Ver. 1–8.)

Then we find Abraham enjoying high communion *with* the Lord, first, in reference to his own personal interests (ver. 9–15), and secondly, in reference to the destinies of Sodom (ver. 16–21). What confirmation to Abraham's heart in the absolute promise —"*Sarah* shall have a son"! Yet this promise only elicited a laugh from Sarah, as it had elicited one from Abraham in the preceding chapter.

There are two kinds of laughter spoken of in Scripture. There is, first, the laughter with which the Lord fills our mouth, when, at some trying crisis, He appears in a signal manner for our relief.

"When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with *laughter*, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, 'The Lord hath done great things for them;' the Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." (Psalm cxxvi. 1, 2.) Again, there is the laughter with which unbelief fills our mouths, when God's promises are too magnificent for our narrow hearts to take in, or the visible agency too small, in our judgment, for the accomplishment of His grand designs. The first of these we are never ashamed or afraid to avow.—Zion's sons are not ashamed to say, "Then was our mouth filled with laughter." (Psalm cxxvi. 2.) When Jehovah makes us to laugh, we may laugh heartily. "But Sarah denied, saying, 'I laughed not;' for she was afraid." Unbelief makes us cowards and liars: faith makes us bold and truthful,—it enables us to "come boldly," and to "draw near with true hearts."

But further, Abraham is made the depositary of God's thoughts and counsels about Sodom. Though having nothing to do with it personally, yet he was so near the Lord that he was let into His mind in reference to it. The way to know the divine purposes about this present evil world, is not to be mixed up with it, in its schemes and speculations, but to be entirely separated from it. The more closely we walk with God, and the more subject we are to His Word, the more we shall know of His mind about everything. I do not need to study the

newspaper in order to know what is going to happen in the world: God's Word reveals all I want to know. In its pure and sanctifying pages I learn all about the character, the course, and the destiny of the world; whereas, if I go to the men of the world for news, I may expect that the devil will use them to cast dust in my eyes.

Had Abraham visited Sodom in order to obtain information about its facts, had he applied to some of its leading intelligent men, to know what they thought of Sodom's present condition and future prospects, how would he have been answered? Doubtless, they would have called his attention to their agricultural and architectural schemes, the vast resources of the country; they would have placed before his eyes one vast, mingled scene of buying and selling, building and planting, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. Doubtless, too, they would never dream of judgment, and if any one had made mention thereof, their mouths would have been filled with infidel laughter. Hence, then, it is plain that Sodom was not the place in which to learn about Sodom's end. No; the place where "Abraham stood before the Lord," afforded the only proper point from whence to take in the whole prospect. There he could stand entirely above the fogs and mists which had gathered upon Sodom's horizon. There, in the clearness and calmness of the divine presence, he could understand it all. And what use did he make of his knowledge and his elevated position? how was he

occupied in the Lord's presence? The answer to these inquiries leads us to the third special privilege enjoyed by our patriarch in this chapter, namely,—

Intercession for others *before* the Lord. He was enabled to plead for those who were mixed up in Sodom's defilement, and in danger of being involved in Sodom's judgment. This was a happy and a holy use to make of his place of nearness to God. Thus it is ever. The soul that can "draw near to God," in the assurance of faith, having the heart and conscience perfectly at rest, being able to repose in God as to the past, the present, and the future—that soul will be able and willing to intercede for others. The man who has on "the whole armor of God," will be able to pray "for all saints." And, oh! what a view this gives us of the intercession of our Great High Priest, who has passed into the heavens! What infinite repose He enjoys in all the divine counsels! With what conscious acceptance He sits enthroned amid the brightness of the Majesty in the heavens! and with what efficacy He pleads before that Majesty for those who are toiling along amid the defilement of this present scene! Happy—ineffably happy—they who are the subjects of such all-prevailing intercession! At once happy and secure. Would that we had hearts to enter into all this,—hearts enlarged, by personal communion with God, to take in more of the infinite fullness of His grace, and the suitability of His provision for all our need.

We see, in this scripture, that how blessed soever

Abraham's intercession might be, yet it was limited, because the intercessor was *but a man*. It did not reach the need. He said, "I will speak *yet but this once*," and there he stopped short, as if afraid of having presented too large a draft at the treasury of infinite grace, or forgetting that faith's check was never yet dishonored at God's bank. It was not that he was straitened in God. By no means. There was abundance of grace and patience in Him to have hearkened to His dear servant had he proceeded even to three or one; but the servant was limited. He was afraid of overdrawing his account: he ceased to ask, and God ceased to give. Not so our blessed Intercessor. Of Him it can be said, "He is able to save *to the uttermost*, ... seeing he *ever* liveth to make intercession." May our hearts cling to Him, in all our need, our weakness, and our conflict.

Before closing this section, I would offer a remark, which, whether it may be regarded as properly flowing out of the truth contained therein, or not, is nevertheless worthy of consideration. It is of the utmost importance, in the study of Scripture, to distinguish between God's moral government of the world, and the specific hope of the Church. The entire body of Old Testament prophecy, and much of the New, treats of the former, and, in so doing, presents, I need hardly say, a subject of commanding interest to every Christian. It is interesting to know what God is doing, and will do, with all the nations of the earth,—interesting to read God's

thoughts about Tyre, Babylon, Nineveh, and Jerusalem; about Egypt, Assyria, and the land of Israel. In short, the entire range of Old Testament prophecy demands the prayerful attention of every true believer. But, let it be remembered, we do not find therein contained the proper hope of the Church. How could we? If we have not therein the Church's existence directly revealed, how could we have the Church's hope? Impossible. It is not that the Church cannot find there a rich harvest of divine moral principles, which she may most happily and profitably use. She undoubtedly can; but this is quite another thing from finding there her proper existence and specific hope. And yet a large portion of the Old Testament prophecies has been applied to the Church; and this application has involved the whole subject in such mist and confusion, that simple minds are scared away from the study, and in neglecting the study of prophecy, they have also neglected that which is quite distinct from prophecy, properly so called—even the hope of the Church; which hope, be it well remembered, is not anything which God is going to do with the nations of the earth, but to meet the Lord Jesus in the clouds of heaven, to be forever with Him and forever like Him.

Many may say, I have no *head* for prophecy. Perhaps not, but have you a *heart* for Christ? Surely, if you love Christ you will love His appearing, though you may have no capacity for prophetic investigation. An affectionate wife may not have a

head to enter into her husband's affairs, but she has a heart for her husband's return;—she might not be able to understand his ledger and day-book, but she knows his footstep and recognizes his voice. The most unlettered saint, if only he has affection for the Person of the Lord Jesus, can entertain the most intense desire to see Him; and this is the Church's hope. The apostle could say to the Thessalonians, "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to *wait for His Son from heaven.*" (1 Thess. i. 9, 10.) Now, evidently, those Thessalonian saints could, at the moment of their conversion, have known little, if anything, of prophecy, or the special subject thereof; and yet they were, at that very moment, put into the full possession and power of the specific hope of the Church—even the coming of the Son. Thus is it throughout the entire New Testament. There, no doubt, we have prophecy,—there, too, we have God's moral government; but, at the same time, numberless passages might be adduced in proof of the fact, that the common hope of Christians in apostolic times—the simple, unimpeded, and unencumbered hope—was, THE RETURN OF THE BRIDEGROOM. May the Holy Ghost revive "that blessed hope" in the Church; may He gather in the number of the elect, and "make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

CHAPTER XIX

THERE are two methods which the Lord graciously adopts, in order to draw the heart away from this present world. The first is, by setting before it the attractiveness and stability of "things above:" the second is, by faithfully declaring the evanescent and shakable nature of "things on the earth." The close of Hebrews xii furnishes a beautiful example of each of these methods. After stating the truth, that we are come unto mount Zion, with all its attendant joys and privileges, the apostle goes on to say, "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven; whose voice then shook the earth, but now He hath promised, saying, 'Yet once I shake, not only the earth, but also heaven.' Now this 'once' signifieth the removal of the shakable things, as of things that are made, that the unshakable things may remain." Now it is much better to be *drawn* by the joys of heaven, than *driven* by the sorrows of earth. The believer should not wait to be shaken out of present things. He should not wait for the world to give him up, before he gives up the world: he should give it up in the power of communion with heavenly things. There is no difficulty in giving up the world when we have, by faith, laid hold of Christ: the

difficulty would then be to hold it. If a scavenger were left an estate of ten thousand a year, he would not long continue to sweep the streets. Thus, if we are realizing our portion amid the unshakable realities of heaven, we shall find little difficulty in resigning the delusive joys of earth. Let us now look at the solemn section of inspired history here set before us.

In it we find Lot "sitting in the gate of Sodom," the place of authority. He has evidently made progress,—he has "got on in the world." Looked at from a worldly point of view, his course has been a successful one. He at first "pitched his tent *toward* Sodom;" then, no doubt, he found his way into it; and now we find him sitting in the gate—a prominent, influential post. How different is all this from the scene with which the preceding chapter opens! But, ah! my reader, the reason is obvious. "*By faith* Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a *strange country*, dwelling in tabernacles." We have no such statement in reference to Lot.* It could not be said, By faith Lot sat in the gate of Sodom. Alas! no; he gets no place among the noble army of confessors—the great cloud of witnesses to the power of faith. The world was his snare, present things his bane. He did not "endure as seeing Him who is invisible." He looked at "the things which are seen, and temporal;" whereas Abraham looked at "the things which are unseen

*It would furnish a very searching question for the heart, in reference to every undertaking, were we to ask, Am I doing this by faith? "Whatever is not of faith is sin;" and "without faith, it is impossible to please God."

and eternal." There was a most material difference between those two men, who, though they started together on their course, reached a very different goal, so far as their public testimony was concerned. No doubt Lot was saved, yet it was "so as by fire," for, truly, "his work was burned up." On the other hand, Abraham had "an abundant entrance ministered unto him into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Further, we do not find that Lot is permitted to enjoy any of the high distinctions and privileges with which Abraham was favored. Instead of refreshing the Lord, Lot gets his righteous soul vexed; instead of enjoying communion *with* the Lord, he is at a lamentable distance *from* the Lord; and, lastly, instead of interceding for others, he finds enough to do to intercede for himself. The Lord remained to commune with Abraham, and merely sent His angels to Sodom; and these angels could with difficulty be induced to enter into Lot's house, or partake of his hospitality: "they said, 'Nay, but *we will abide in the street all night.*'" What a rebuke! How different from the willing acceptance of Abraham's invitation, as expressed in the words, "So do as thou hast said."

There is a great deal involved in the act of partaking of any one's hospitality. It expresses, when intelligently looked at, full fellowship with him.—"I will come in unto him, and sup *with him*, and *he with Me*."—"If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide." If they

had not so judged her, they would not have accepted her invitation.

Hence, the angels' word to Lot contains a most unqualified condemnation of his position in Sodom. They would rather abide in the street all night than enter under the roof of one in a wrong position. Indeed, their only object in coming to Sodom seems to have been to deliver Lot, and that, too, because of Abraham; as we read,—"And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God *remembered Abraham*, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt." This is strongly marked. It was simply for Abraham's sake that Lot was suffered to escape. The Lord has no sympathy with a worldly mind; and such a mind it was that had led Lot to settle down amid the defilement of that guilty city. Faith never put him there; a spiritual mind never put him there; "his righteous soul" never put him there: it was simple love for this present evil world that led him first to "*choose*," then to "pitch his tent toward," and finally to "sit in the gate of Sodom." And, oh, what a portion he chose! Truly, it was a broken cistern which could hold no water, —a broken reed which pierced his hand. It is a bitter thing to seek, in any wise, to manage for ourselves: we are sure to make the most grievous mistakes. It is infinitely better to allow God to order all our ways for us,—to commit them all, in the spirit of a little child, to Him who is so willing and so able to manage for us,—to put the pen, as it

were, into His blessed hand, and allow Him to sketch out our entire course, according to His own unerring wisdom and infinite love.

No doubt Lot thought he was doing well for himself and his family when he moved to Sodom, but the sequel shows how entirely he erred; and it also sounds in our ears a voice of deepest solemnity—a voice telling us to beware how we yield to the incipient workings of a worldly spirit. "Be content with such things as ye have." Why? Is it because you are so well off in the world?—because you have all that your poor rambling hearts would seek after?—because there is not so much as a single chink in your circumstances through which a vain desire might make its escape? Is this to be the ground of our contentment? By no means. What then? "For He hath said, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.'" Blessed portion! Had Lot been content therewith, he never would have sought the well-watered plains of Sodom.

And then, if we need any further ground of inducement to the exercise of a contented spirit, truly we have it in this chapter. What did Lot gain in the way of happiness and contentment? Little indeed. The people of Sodom surround his house, and threaten to break into it; he seeks to appease them by a most humiliating proposition, but all in vain. If a man will mingle with the world, for the purpose of self-aggrandizement, he must make up his mind to endure the sad consequences. We cannot profit by the world, and, at the same time, bear effectual

testimony against its wickedness. "This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge." This will never do. The true way to judge is to stand apart, in the moral power of grace, not in the supercilious spirit of pharisaism. To attempt to reprove the world's ways, while we profit by association with it, is vanity; the world will attach very little weight to such reproof and such testimony. Thus it was, too, with Lot's testimony to his sons-in-law; "he seemed as one that mocked." It is vain to speak of approaching judgment while finding our place, our portion, and our enjoyment in the very scene which is to be judged.

Abraham was in a far better position to speak of judgment, inasmuch as he was entirely outside of the sphere thereof. The tent of the stranger at Mamre was in no danger, though Sodom were in flames. O, that our hearts longed more after the precious fruits of a realized strangership, so that instead of having, like poor Lot, to be dragged by main force out of the world, and casting a lingering look behind, we might, with holy alacrity, bound forward, like a racer, towards the goal.

Lot evidently longed after the scene which he was forced, by angelic power, to abandon; for not only had the angels to lay hold of him, and hasten him away from the impending judgment, but even when exhorted to escape for *his life*, (which was all he could save from the wreck,) and flee to the mountain, he replies, "Oh, not so, my Lord: behold, now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast

magnified thy mercy which thou hast showed unto me in saving *my life;* and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me and I die: behold, now, *this city* is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: oh! let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live." What a picture! He seems like a drowning man, ready to catch even at a floating feather. Though commanded by the angel to flee to the mountain, he refuses, and still fondly clings to the idea of "a little city,"—some little shred of the world. He feared death in the place to which God was mercifully directing him,—yea, he feared all manner of evil, and could only hope for safety in some little city—some spot of his own devising. "Oh! let me escape *thither, and my soul shall live.*" How sad! There is no casting himself wholly upon God. Alas! he had too long walked at a distance from Him,—too long breathed the dense atmosphere of a "city," to be able to appreciate the pure air of the divine presence, or lean on the arm of the Almighty. His soul seemed completely unhinged; his worldly nest had been abruptly broken up, and he was not quite able to nestle himself, by faith, in the bosom of God. He had not been cultivating communion with the invisible world, and now the visible was passing away from beneath his feet with tremendous rapidity. The "fire and brimstone from heaven" were about to fall upon that in which all his hopes and all his affections were centred. The thief had broken in upon him, and he seems entirely divested of spiritual

nerve and self-possession. He is at his wits' end; but the worldly element, being strong in his heart, prevails, and he seeks his only refuge in "a little city." Yet he is not at ease even there, for he leaves it and gets up to the mountain. He does through fear what he would not do at the command of God's messenger.

And then see his end!—His own children make him drunk, and in his drunkenness he becomes the instrument of bringing into existence the Ammonites and the Moabites—the determined enemies of the people of God. What a volume of solemn instruction is here! Oh, my reader, see here what the world is! see what a fatal thing it is to allow the heart to go out after it! What a commentary is Lot's history upon that brief but comprehensive admonition, "Love not the world"! This world's Sodoms and its Zoars are all alike. There is no security, no peace, no rest, no solid satisfaction for the heart therein. The judgment of God hangs over the whole scene; and He only holds back the sword in long-suffering mercy, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Let us, then, seek to pursue a path of holy separation from the world. Let us, while standing outside its entire range, be found cherishing the hope of the Master's return. May its well-watered plains have no charms for our hearts. May its honors, its distinctions, and its riches be all surveyed by us in the light of the coming glory of Christ. May we be enabled, like the holy patriarch Abraham, to get up

into the presence of the Lord, and, from that elevated ground, look forth upon the scene of widespread ruin and desolation—to see it all, by faith's anticipative glance, a smoking ruin. *Such it will be.* "The earth also, and the things that are therein, shall be burned up." All that about which the children of this world are so intensely anxious—after which they are so eagerly grasping—for which they are so fiercely contending,—all—all will be burned up. And who can tell how soon? Where is Sodom? Where is Gomorrha? Where are the cities of the plain—those cities which were once all life and stir and bustle? Where are they now? All gone! swept away by the judgment of God! consumed by His fire and brimstone! Well, His judgments now hang over this guilty world. The day is at hand; and while judgments impend, the sweet story of grace is being told out to many an ear. Happy they who hear and believe that story! Happy they who flee to the strong mountain of God's salvation! who take refuge behind the cross of the Son of God, and therein find pardon and peace!

God grant that the reader of these lines may know what it is (with a conscience purged from sin, and his heart's affections purged from the defiling influence of the world,) to wait for the Son from heaven.

CHAPTER XX.

WE have two distinct points in this chapter: first, the moral degradation to which the child of God sometimes subjects himself, in the view of the world; and secondly, the moral dignity which *always* belongs to him in the view of God. Abraham again exhibits the dread of circumstances, which the heart can so easily understand. He sojourns in Gerar, and fears the men of that place. Judging that God was not there, he forgets that He is always with him. He seems to be more occupied with the men of Gerar than with the One who was stronger than they. Forgetting God's ability to protect his wife, he has recourse to the same stratagem which, years before, he had adopted in Egypt. This is very admonitory. The father of the faithful was carried away by taking his eye off God. He lost, for a little, his centre in God, and therefore gave way. How true it is, that we are only strong as we cling to God in the sense of our perfect weakness. So long as we are in the path of His appointment, nothing can harm us. Had Abraham simply leaned on God, the men of Gerar would not have meddled with him; and it was his privilege to have vindicated God's faithfulness in the midst of the most appalling difficulties. Thus, too, he would have maintained his own dignity as a man of faith.

It is often a source of sorrow to the heart to mark

how the children of God dishonor Him, and, as a consequence, lower themselves before the world by losing the sense of His sufficiency for every emergency. So long as we live in the realization of the truth that *all* our springs are in God, so long shall we be above the world in every shape and form. There is nothing so elevating to the whole moral being as faith: it carries one entirely beyond the reach of this world's thoughts; for how can the men of the world, or even worldly-minded Christians, understand the life of faith? Impossible. The springs on which it draws lie far away beyond their comprehension. They live on the surface of present things. So long as they can *see* what they deem a proper foundation for hope and confidence, so long they are hopeful and confident; but the idea of resting solely on the promise of an unseen God, they understand not. But the man of faith is calm in the midst of scenes in which nature can *see* nothing. Hence it is that faith ever seems, in the judgment of nature, such a reckless, improvident, visionary thing. None but those who know God can ever approve the actings of faith; for none but they really understand the solid and truly-reasonable ground of such actings.

In this chapter we find the man of God actually exposing himself to the rebuke and reproach of the men of the world, by reason of his actings when under the power of unbelief. Thus it must ever be. Nothing but faith can impart true elevation to a man's course and character. We may, it is true, see some who are naturally upright and honorable in

their ways, yet nature's uprightness and honor cannot be trusted; they rest on a bad foundation, and are liable to give way at any moment. It is only faith which can impart a truly elevated moral tone, because it connects the soul in living power with God, the only source of true morality. And it is a remarkable fact, that in the case of all those whom God has graciously taken up, we see that, when off the path of faith, they sank even lower than other men. This will account for Abraham's conduct in this part of his history.

But there is another point of much interest and value brought out here. We find that Abraham had harbored an evil thing for a number of years;—he had, it seems, started upon his course with a certain reserve in his soul, which reserve was the result of his want of full, unqualified confidence in God. Had he been able fully to trust God in reference to Sarah, there would have been no need of any reserve or subterfuge whatever. God would have fenced her round about from every ill; and who can harm those who are the happy subjects of His unslumbering guardianship? However, through mercy, Abraham is enabled to bring out the root of the whole matter —to confess and judge it thoroughly, and get rid of it. This is the true way to act. There can be no real blessing and power till every particle of leaven is brought forth into the light and there trampled under foot. God's patience is exhaustless. He can wait,—He can bear with us; but He never will conduct a soul to the culminating point of blessing and

power while leaven remains known and unjudged. Thus much as to Abimelech and Abraham. Let us now look at the moral dignity of the latter in the view of God.

In the history of God's people, whether we look at them as a whole, or as individuals, we are often struck with the amazing difference between what they are in God's view, and what they are in the view of the world. God sees His people in Christ. He looks at them through Christ; and hence He sees them "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing." They are as Christ is before God. They are perfected forever, as to their standing in Christ. "They are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit."

But in themselves, they are poor, feeble, imperfect, stumbling, inconsistent creatures; and, inasmuch as it is what they are in themselves, and that alone, that the world takes knowledge of, therefore it is that the difference seems so great between the divine and the human estimate.

Yet it is God's prerogative to set forth the beauty, the dignity, and the perfection of His people. It is His exclusive prerogative, inasmuch as it is He Himself who has bestowed those things. They are only comely through the comeliness which He has put upon them, and it is therefore due to Him to declare what that comeliness is; and, truly, He does it in a manner worthy of Himself, and never more blessedly than when the enemy comes forth to injure, to curse, or accuse. Thus, when Balak seeks to curse the seed of Abraham, Jehovah's word is, "I have not

beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither have I seen perverseness in Israel." "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel." Again, when Satan stands forth to resist Joshua, the word is, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, . . . is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" Thus He ever puts Himself between His people and every tongue that would accuse them. He does not answer the accusation by a reference to what His people are in themselves, or to what they are in the view of the men of this world, but to what He Himself has made them, and where He set them.

Thus, in Abraham's case, he might lower himself in the view of Abimelech, king of Gerar, and Abimelech might have to rebuke him, yet when God comes to deal with the case, He says to Abimelech, "Behold, thou art but a dead man;" and of Abraham He says, "He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee." Yes, with all "the integrity of his heart and the innocency of his hands," the king of Gerar was "but a dead man;" and, moreover, he must be a debtor to the prayers of the erring and inconsistent stranger for the restoration of the health of his household. Such is the manner of God. He may have many a secret controversy with His child, on the ground of his practical ways, but directly the enemy enters a suit against him, Jehovah ever pleads His servant's cause.—"Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm."—"He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of Mine eye."—"It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?" No

dart of the enemy can ever penetrate the shield behind which the Lord has hidden the very feeblest lamb of His blood-bought flock. He hides His people in His pavilion, sets their feet upon the Rock of Ages, lifts their heads above their enemies round about, and fills their hearts with the everlasting joy of His salvation.

His name be praised for evermore!

CHAPTER XXI

"AND the Lord visited Sarah, as He had said, and He did unto Sarah as He had spoken." Here we have accomplished promise—the blessed fruit of patient waiting upon God. None ever waited in vain. The soul that takes hold of God's promise by faith, has gotten a stable reality which will never fail him. Thus was it with Abraham; thus was it with all the faithful from age to age; and thus will it be with all those who are enabled, in any measure, to trust in the living God. Oh! it is a wonderful blessing to have God Himself as our portion and resting-place, amid the unsatisfying shadows of this scene through which we are passing,—to have our anchor cast within the vail,—to have the word and oath of God—the two immutable things—to lean upon, for the comfort and tranquility of our souls.

When God's promise stood before the soul of

Abraham as an accomplished fact, he might well have learnt the futility of his own effort to reach that accomplishment. Ishmael was of no use whatever, so far as God's promise was concerned. He might, and did, afford something for nature's affections to entwine themselves around, thus furnishing a more difficult task for Abraham to perform afterwards; but he was in no wise conducive to the development of the purpose of God, or to the establishment of Abraham's faith—quite the reverse. Nature can never do aught for God. The Lord must "visit," and the Lord must "do," and faith must wait, and nature must be still,—yea, must be entirely set aside as a dead, worthless thing, and then the divine glory can shine out, and faith find in that outshining all its rich and sweet reward. "Sarah conceived and bare Abraham a son in his old age, *at the set time* of which God had spoken to him." There is such a thing as God's "set time"—His "due season," and for this the faithful must be content to wait. The time may seem long, and hope deferred may make the heart sick; but the spiritual mind will ever find its relief in the assurance that all is for the ultimate display of God's glory. "For the vision is for an appointed time, but *at the end* it shall speak and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will assuredly come, it will not tarry . . . but the just shall live by his faith." (Hab. ii. 3, 4.) This wondrous faith! It brings into our present all the power of God's future, and feeds upon God's promise as a present reality. By its power, the soul is kept hanging upon God

when every outward thing seems to be against it, and, "at the set time," the mouth is filled with laughter. "Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born unto him." Thus nature had nothing to glory in. "Man's extremity was God's opportunity;" and Sarah said, "*God* hath made me to laugh." All is triumph when God is allowed to show Himself.

Now, while the birth of Isaac filled Sarah's mouth with laughter, it introduced an entirely new element into Abraham's house. The son of the free-woman very speedily developed the true character of the son of the bondwoman. Indeed, Isaac proved, in principle, to be to the household of Abraham what the implantation of the new nature is in the soul of a sinner. It was not *Ishmael changed*, but it was *Isaac born*. The son of the bondwoman could never be anything else but that. He might become a great nation, he might dwell in the wilderness and become an archer, he might become the father of twelve princes, but he was the son of the bondwoman all the while. On the contrary, no matter how weak and despised Isaac might be, he was the son of the free-woman. His position and character, his standing and prospects, were all from the Lord. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Regeneration is not a change of the old nature, but the introduction of a new;—it is the implantation of the nature or life of the Second Adam, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, founded upon the

accomplished redemption of Christ, and in full keeping with the sovereign will or counsel of God. The moment a sinner believes in his heart, and confesses with his mouth, the Lord Jesus, he becomes the possessor of a new life, and that life is Christ. He is born of God, is a child of God, is a son of the free-woman. (See Rom. x. 9; Col. iii. 4; 1 John iii. 1, 2; Gal. iii. 26; iv. 31.)

Nor does the introduction of this new nature alter, in the slightest degree, the true, essential character of the old. This latter continues what it was, and is made in no respect better; yea, rather, there is the full display of its evil character in opposition to the new element. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other." There they are in all their distinctness, and the one is only thrown into relief by the other.

I believe this doctrine of the two natures in the believer is not generally understood; and yet, so long as there is ignorance of it, the mind must be utterly at sea in reference to the true standing and privileges of the child of God. Some there are who think that regeneration is a certain change which the old nature undergoes; and, moreover, that this change is gradual in its operation, until, at length, the whole man becomes transformed. That this idea is unsound, can be proved by various quotations from the New Testament. For example, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." How can that which is thus spoken of ever undergo any improve-

ment? The apostle goes on to say, "It is not subject to the law of God, *neither indeed can be.*" If it *cannot be* subject to the law of God, how can it be improved? how can it undergo any change? Again, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Do what you will with flesh, and it is flesh all the while. As Solomon says, "Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar, among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him." (Prov. xxvii. 22.) There is no use in seeking to make foolishness wise: you must introduce heavenly wisdom into the heart that has been heretofore only governed by folly. Again, "Ye have put off the old man." (Col. iii. 9.) He does not say, Ye have improved, or are seeking to improve, "the old man," but, Ye have put it off. This gives us a totally different idea. There is a very great difference between seeking to mend an old garment, and casting it aside altogether and putting on a new one. This is the idea of the last-quoted passage. It is a putting off the old, and a putting on of the new. Nothing can be more distinct or simple.

Passages might easily be multiplied to prove the unsoundness of the theory with respect to the gradual improvement of the old nature,—to prove that the old nature is dead in sins, and utterly unrenewable and unimprovable; and, moreover, that the only thing we can do with it is to keep it under our feet in the power of that new life which we have in union with our risen Head in the heavens.

The birth of Isaac did not improve Ishmael, but

only brought out his real opposition to the child of promise. He might have gone on very quietly and orderly till Isaac made his appearance; but then he showed what he was, by persecuting and mocking at the child of resurrection. What then was the remedy? to make Ishmael better? By no means; but, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." (8–10.) Here was the only remedy. "That which is crooked cannot be made straight;" therefore you have only to get rid of the crooked thing altogether, and occupy yourself with that which is divinely straight. It is labor lost to seek to make a crooked thing straight. Hence all efforts after the improvement of nature are utterly futile, so far as God is concerned. It may be all very well for men to cultivate and improve that which is of use to themselves; but God has given His children something infinitely better to do, even to cultivate that which is His own creation, the fruits of which, while they in no wise serve to exalt nature, are entirely to His praise and glory.

Now the error into which the Galatian churches fell, was the introduction of that which addressed itself to nature. "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." Here salvation was made to depend upon something that man could be, or man could do, or man could keep. This was upsetting the whole glorious fabric of redemption, which, as the believer knows, rests exclusively upon what Christ is, and what He has done.

To make salvation dependent, in the most remote manner, upon anything in, or done by, man, is to set it entirely aside. In other words, Ishmael must be entirely cast out, and all Abraham's hopes be made to depend upon what God had done and given in the person of Isaac. This, it is needless to say, leaves man nothing to glory in. If present or future blessedness were made to depend upon even a divine change wrought in nature, flesh might glory. Though my nature were improved, it would be something of *me*, and thus God would not have *all* the glory. But when I am introduced into a new creation, I find it is all of God,—designed, matured, developed by Himself alone. God is the actor, and I am a worshiper; He is the blesser, and I am the blessed; He is "the better," and I am "the less" (Heb. vii. 7.); He is the giver, and I am the receiver. This is what makes Christianity what it is; and, moreover, distinguishes it from every system of human religion under the sun, whether it be Romanism, Puseyism, or any other *ism* whatsoever. Human religion gives the creature a place, more or less; it keeps the bondwoman and her son in the house; it gives man something to glory in. On the contrary, Christianity excludes the creature from all interference in the work of salvation,—casts out the bondwoman and her son, and gives *all* the glory to Him to whom alone it is due.

But let us inquire who this bondwoman and her son really are, and what they shadow forth. Galatians iv furnishes ample teaching as to these two

points. In a word, then, the bondwoman represents the covenant of the law; and her son represents all who are "of works of law," or on that principle [ἐξ ἔργων νόμου]. This is very plain. The bondwoman only genders to bondage, and can never bring forth a free man. How can she? The law never could give liberty; for so long as a man was alive, it ruled him. (Rom. vii. 1.) I can never be free so long as I am under the dominion of any one; but while I live, the law rules me, and nothing but death can give me deliverance from its dominion. This is the blessed doctrine of Rom. vii.—"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to Him that is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." This is freedom; for "if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (John viii. 36.) "So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free." (Gal. iv. 31.)

Now, it is in the power of this freedom that we are enabled to obey the command, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son." If I am not consciously free, I shall be seeking to attain liberty in the strangest way possible, even by keeping the bondwoman in the house: in other words, I shall be seeking to get life by keeping the law; I shall be establishing my own righteousness. No doubt it will involve a struggle to cast out this element of bondage, for legalism is natural to our hearts. "The thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight, because of his

son." Still, however grievous it may be, it is according to the divine mind that we should abidingly "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage." (Gal. v. 1.) May we, beloved reader, so fully and experimentally enter into the blessedness of God's provision for us in Christ, that we may be done with all thoughts about the flesh, and all that it can be, do, or produce. There is a fullness in Christ which renders all appeal to nature utterly superfluous and vain.

CHAPTER XXII

ABRAHAM is now in a fit moral position to have his heart put to a most severe test. The long-cherished reserve being put forth from his heart, in chap. xx,—the bondwoman and her son being put forth from his house, as in chap. xxi,—he now stands forth in the most honored position in which any soul can be placed, and that is a position of trial from the hand of God Himself. There are various kinds of trial;—trial from the hand of Satan; trial from surrounding circumstances; but the highest character of trial is that which comes directly from the hand of God, when He puts His dear child into the furnace for the purpose of testing the reality of his faith. God will do this: He must have reality. It will not do to say, "Lord, Lord," or,

"I go, sir." The heart must be probed to the very bottom, in order that no element of hypocrisy or false profession may be allowed to lodge there. "My son, give Me *thine heart.*" He does not say, Give Me thine head, or thine intellect, or thy talents, or thy tongue, or thy money; but, "Give Me thine heart:" and in order to prove the sincerity of our response to this gracious command, He will lay His hand upon something very near our hearts. Thus he says to Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering, npon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." This was coming very close to Abraham's heart: it was passing him through a searching crucible indeed. God "requires truth in the inward parts." There may be much truth on the lips, and much in the intellect, but God looks for it in the heart. It is no ordinary proof that will satisfy God, as to the love of our hearts. He Himself did not rest satisfied with giving an ordinary proof. He gave His Son, and we should aim at giving very striking proofs of our love to Him who so loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins.

However, it is well to see that God confers a signal honor upon us when He thus tests our hearts. We never read that the Lord did tempt Lot. No: Sodom tempted Lot. He never reached a sufficiently high elevation to warrant his being tried by the hand of Jehovah. It was too plainly manifest that there was plenty between his heart and the Lord,

and it did not, therefore, require the furnace to bring that out. Sodom would have held out no temptation whatever to Abraham. This was made manifest in his interview with Sodom's king, in chapter xiv. God knew well that Abraham loved Him far better than Sodom; but He would make it manifest that he loved Him better than any one or anything, by laying His hand upon the nearest and dearest object.—"Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac." Yes, Isaac, the child of promise,—Isaac, the object of long-deferred hope, the object of parental love, and the one in whom all the kindreds of the earth were to be blessed,—this Isaac must be offered as a burnt-offering. This, surely, was putting faith to the test, in order that, being more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, it might be found unto praise and honor and glory. Had Abraham's whole soul not been stayed simply on the Lord, he never could have yielded unhesitating obedience to such a searching command; but God Himself was the living and abiding support of his heart, and therefore he was prepared to give up all for Him.

The soul that has found *all* its springs in God, can, without any demur, retire from *all* creature streams. We can give up the creature just in proportion as we have found out, or become experimentally acquainted with, the Creator, and no further. To attempt to give up the visible things in any other way save in the energy of that faith which lays hold of the invisible, is the most fruitless labor

possible. It cannot be done. I will hold fast my Isaac until I have found my all in God. It is when we are enabled, by faith, to say, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble," that we can also add, "Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." (Ps. xlvi. 1, 2.)

"And Abraham rose up early in the morning." There is ready obedience. "I made haste and delayed not to keep Thy commandments." Faith never stops to look at circumstances, or ponder results; it only looks at God; it expresses itself thus: "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the gentiles; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." (Gal. i. 15, 16.) The moment we confer with flesh and blood, our testimony and service are marred, for flesh and blood can never obey. We must rise early, and carry out, through grace, the divine command. Thus we are blessed, and God is glorified. Having God's own Word as the basis of our acting, will ever impart strength and stability to our acting. If we merely act from impulse, when the impulse subsides, the acting will subside also.

There are two things needful to a course of steady and consistent action, viz., the Holy Ghost as the power of action, and the Word to give proper direction. To use a familiar illustration,—on a railway, we should find steam of little use without the iron

rails firmly laid down: the former is the power by which we move; and the latter, the direction. It is needless to add that the rails would be of little use without the steam. Now Abraham was blessed with both. He had the power of action conferred by God, and the command to act given by God also. His devotedness was of a most definite character; and this is deeply important. We frequently find much that looks like devotedness, but which, in reality, is but the desultory activity of a will not brought under the powerful action of the Word of God. All such apparent devotedness is worthless, and the spirit from which it proceeds will very speedily evaporate. We may lay down the following principle; viz., whenever devotedness passes beyond divinely-appointed bounds, it is suspicious; if it comes not up to these bounds, it is defective; if it flows without them, it is erratic. I quite admit that there are extraordinary operations and ways of the Spirit of God, in which He asserts His own sovereignty, and rises above ordinary bounds; but, in such cases, the evidence of divine activity will be sufficiently strong to carry home conviction to every spiritual mind; nor will they, in the slightest degree, interfere with the truth of the principle that true devotedness will ever be founded upon and governed by divine principle. To sacrifice a son might seem to be an act of most extraordinary devotedness, but be it remembered, that what gave that act all its value in God's sight was the simple fact of its being based upon God's command.

Then we have another thing connected with true devotedness, and that is, a spirit of worship.—"I and the lad will go yonder and *worship*." The really-devoted servant will keep his eye not on his service, be it ever so great, but on the Master, and this will produce a spirit of worship. If I love my master according to the flesh, I shall not mind whether I am cleaning his shoes or driving his carriage; but if I am thinking more of myself than of him, I shall rather be a coachman than a shoeblack. So is it precisely in the service of the heavenly Master;—if I am thinking only of Him, planting churches and making tents will be both alike to me. We may see the same thing in angelic ministry. It matters not to an angel whether he be sent to destroy an army or to protect the person of some heir of salvation; it is the Master who entirely fills his vision. As some one has remarked, "if two angels were sent from heaven, one to rule an empire, and the other to sweep the streets, they would not dispute about their respective work." This is most true, and so should it be with us. The servant should ever be combined with the worshiper, and the works of our hands perfumed with the ardent breathings of our spirits. In other words, we should go forth to our work in the spirit of those memorable words, "I and the lad will go yonder and worship." This would effectually preserve us from that merely mechanical service into which we are so prone to drop; doing things for doing's sake, and being more occupied with our work than with our Master. All

must flow from simple faith in God, and obedience to His Word.

"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten." (Heb. xi. 17.) It is only as we are walking by faith that we can begin, continue, and end our works in God. Abraham not merely set out to offer his son, but he went on and reached the spot which God had appointed. "And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together." And further on we read, "And Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son." This was real work, a "work of faith and labor of love" in the highest sense. It was no mere mockery—no drawing near with the lips, while the heart was far off,—no saying, "'I go, sir,' and went not." It was all deep reality, just such as faith ever delights to produce, and which God delights to accept. It is easy to make a show of devotedness when there is no demand for it,—it is easy to say, "Though all shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended . . . . though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee;" but the point is to stand the trial. When Peter was put to the test, he entirely broke down. Faith never talks of what it will do, but does what it can in the strength of the Lord. Nothing can be

more thoroughly worthless than a spirit of empty pretension. It is just as worthless as the basis on which it rests. But faith acts "when it is tried;" till then it is content to be unseen and silent.

Now, it needs hardly to be remarked that God is glorified in those holy activities of faith; He is the immediate object of them, as He is the spring from whence they emanate. There was not a scene in Abraham's entire history in which God was so much glorified as the scene on Mount Moriah. There it was that he was enabled to bear testimony to the fact that he had found all his fresh springs in God—found them not merely previous to, but after, Isaac's birth. This is a most touching point. It is one thing to rest in God's blessings, and another thing to rest in Himself: it is one thing to trust God when I have before my eyes the channel through which the blessing is to flow, and quite another thing to trust Him when that channel is entirely stopped up. This was what proved the excellency of Abraham's faith. He showed that he could not merely trust God for an innumerable seed while Isaac stood before him in health and vigor, but just as fully if he were a smoking victim on the altar. This was a high order of confidence in God,—it was unalloyed confidence; it was not a confidence propped up in part by the Creator and in part by the creature. No; it rested on one solid pedestal, viz., God Himself. "He accounted that God was able." He never accounted that Isaac was able. Isaac, without God, was nothing: God, without Isaac, was everything.

This is a principle of the very last importance, and one eminently calculated to test the heart most keenly. Does it make any difference to me to see the apparent channel of all my blessings dried up? Am I dwelling sufficiently near the fountain-head to be able, with a worshiping spirit, to behold all the creature streams dried up? This I do feel to be a searching question. Have I such a simple view of God's sufficiency as to be able, as it were, to "stretch forth my hand and take the knife to slay my son"? Abraham was enabled to do this, because his eye rested on the God of resurrection,—"he accounted that God was able to raise him up even from the dead."

In a word, it was with God he had to do, and that was quite enough. He was not suffered to strike the blow. He had gone to the very utmost bounds; he had come up to the line beyond which God could not suffer him to go. The blessed One spared the father's heart the pang which He did not spare His own heart, even that of smiting His Son. He, blessed be His name, passed beyond the utmost bounds, for "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief." There was no voice from heaven when, on Calvary, the Father offered up His only begotten Son. No; it was a perfectly-accomplished sacrifice, and in its accomplishment our everlasting peace is sealed.

However, Abraham's devotedness was fully proved and fully accepted. "For now I know that thou

fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me." Mark, it is "*now* I know." It had never been proved before. It was there, no doubt, and if there, God knew it; but the valuable point here is, that God founds His knowledge of it upon the palpable evidence afforded at the altar upon Mount Moriah. Faith is always proved by action, and the fear of God by the fruits which flow from it. "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he had offered Isaac his son on the altar?" (James ii. 21.) Who could think of calling his faith in question? Take away faith, and Abraham appears on Moriah as a murderer and a madman: take faith into account, and he appears as a devoted worshiper—a God-fearing, justified man. But faith must be proved. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man *say* he hath faith, and have not works?" (James ii. 14.) Will either God or man be satisfied with a powerless and profitless profession? Surely not. God looks for reality, and honors it where He sees it; and as for man, he can understand naught save the living and intelligible utterance of a faith that shows itself in acts. We are surrounded by the profession of religion,—the phraseology of faith is on every lip; but faith itself is as rare a gem as ever—that faith which will enable a man to push out from the shore of present circumstances, and meet the waves and the winds, and not only meet them, but endure them, even though the Master should seem to be asleep on the pillow.

And here I would remark the beautiful harmony

between St. James and St. Paul, on the subject of justification. The intelligent and spiritual reader, who bows to the important truth of the plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture, knows full well that on this question it is not with Paul or James we have to do, but with the Holy Ghost, who graciously used each of those honored men as the pen to write His thoughts, just as I might take up a quill pen or a steel pen to write my thoughts, in which case it would be quite preposterous to speak of a discrepancy between the two pens, inasmuch as the writer is one. Hence it is just as impossible that two divinely-inspired penmen could clash, as that two heavenly bodies, while moving in their divinely-appointed orbits, could come into collision.

But, in reality, as might be expected, there is the fullest and most perfect harmony between those two apostles; indeed, on the subject of justification, the one is the counterpart or exponent of the other. St. Paul gives us the inward principle; St. James, the outward development of that principle. The former presents the hidden life; the latter, the manifested life: the former looks at man in relation to God; the latter looks at him in his relation to man. Now we want both: the inward would not do without the outward, and the outward would be valueless and powerless without the inward. "Abraham was justified" when "he believed God," and "Abraham was justified" when "he offered Isaac his son." In the former case, we have his secret standing; in the latter, his public acknowledgment by heaven and

earth. It is well to understand this distinction. There was no voice from heaven when "Abraham believed God," though in God's view he was there, then, and thus "counted righteous;" but "when he had offered his son upon the altar," God could say, "Now I know," and all the world had a powerful and unanswerable proof of the fact that Abraham was a justified man. Thus it will ever be. Where there is the inward principle, there will be the outward acting; but all the value of the latter springs from its connection with the former. Disconnect, for one moment, Abraham's acting, as set forth by St. James, from Abraham's faith, as set forth by St. Paul, and what justifying virtue did it possess? None whatever. All its value, all its efficacy, all its virtue, springs from the fact that it was the outward manifestation of that faith, by virtue of which he had been already counted righteous before God. Thus much as to the admirable harmony between St. Paul and St. James, or rather, as to the unity of the voice of the Holy Ghost, whether that voice be uttered by St. Paul or St. James.

We now return to our chapter. It is deeply interesting to mark here how Abraham's soul is led into a fresh discovery of God's character by the trial of his faith. When we are enabled to bear the testings of God's own hand, it is sure to lead us into some new experience with respect to His character, which makes us to know how valuable the testing is. If Abraham had not stretched out his hand to slay his son, he never would have known the rich and

exquisite depths of that title which he here bestows upon God, viz., "Jehovah-jireh." It is only when we are really put to the test that we discover what God is. Without trial, we can be but theorists, and God would not have us such: He would have us entering into the living depths that are in Himself—the divine realities of personal communion with Him. With what different feelings and convictions must Abraham have retraced his steps from Moriah to Beer-sheba!—from the mount of the Lord to the well of the oath! What very different thoughts of God! What different thoughts of Isaac! What different thoughts of everything! Truly we may say, "Happy is the man that endureth trial." It is an honor put upon one by the Lord Himself, and the deep blessedness of the experience to which it leads cannot be easily estimated. It is when men are brought (to use the language of the one hundred and seventh Psalm,) "to their wit's end," that they discover what God is. Oh, for grace to endure trial, that God's workmanship may appear, and His name be glorified in us!

There is one point which, before closing my remarks on this chapter, I shall notice, and that is, the gracious way in which God gives Abraham credit for having done the act which he had showed himself so fully prepared to do. "'By Myself have I sworn,' saith the Lord; 'for because *thou hast done this thing*, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing, I will bless thee, and in multiplying, I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as

the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of *his enemies;* and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed: because thou hast obeyed My voice.'" This beautifully corresponds with the Spirit's notice of Abraham's acting, as put before us in Hebrews xi, and also in James ii, in both of which scriptures he is looked upon as having offered Isaac his son upon the altar. The grand principle conveyed in the whole matter is this: Abraham proved that he was prepared to have the scene entirely cleared of *all* but God; and, moreover, it was this same principle which both *constituted* and *proved* him a justified man. Faith can do without every one and everything but God. It has the full sense of His sufficiency, and can therefore let go all beside. Hence Abraham could rightly estimate the words, "*By Myself* have I sworn." Yes, this wondrous word, "Myself," was everything to the man of faith. "For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He sware by Himself. . . . . For men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath." The word and oath of the living God should put an end to all the strivings and workings of the human will, and form the immovable anchor of the soul amid all the tossing and tumult of this stormy world.

Now, we must condemn ourselves constantly, be-

cause of the little power which the promise of God has in our hearts. There it is, and we profess to believe it; but, ah! it is not that deep, abiding, influential reality which it ought ever to be; we do not draw from it that "strong consolation" which it is calculated to afford. How little prepared are we, in the power of faith in the promise of God, to slay our Isaac! We need to cry to God that He would be graciously pleased to endow us with a deeper insight into the blessed reality of a life of faith in Himself, that so we may understand better the import of that word of St. John—"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." We can only overcome the world by faith. Unbelief puts us under the power of present things; in other words, it gives the world the victory over us. A soul that has entered, by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, into the sense of God's sufficiency, is entirely independent of things here. Beloved reader, may we know this, for our peace and joy in God, and His glory in us.

CHAPTER XXIII

THIS little section of inspiration furnishes much sweet and profitable instruction to the soul. In it the Holy Spirit sets before us a beautiful exhibition of the mode in which the man of faith should carry himself toward those that are without. While it is true—divinely true—that faith makes a man

independent of the men of the world, it is no less true that faith will ever teach him to walk honestly toward them. We are told to "walk honestly toward them that are without" (1 Thess. iv. 12.), "to provide things honest in the sight of all" (2 Cor. viii. 21.), to "owe no man anything" (Rom. xiii. 8.). These are weighty precepts,—precepts which, even before their distinct enunciation, were duly observed in all ages by the faithful servants of Christ, but which in modern times, alas! have not been sufficiently attended to.

The twenty-third of Genesis, therefore, is worthy of special notice. It opens with the death of Sarah, and introduces Abraham in a new character, viz., that of a mourner.—"Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her." The child of God must meet such things, but he must not meet them as others. The great fact of resurrection comes in to his relief, and imparts a character to his sorrow quite peculiar. (1 Thess. iv. 13, 14.) The man of faith can stand at the grave of a brother or sister in the happy consciousness that it shall not long hold its captive, "for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." The redemption of the soul secures the redemption of the body: the former, we have; the latter, we wait for. (Rom. viii. 23.)

Now, I believe that in purchasing Machpelah for a burying-place, Abraham gave expression to his faith in resurrection. "*He stood up from* before his dead." Faith cannot long keep death in view; it

has a higher object, blessed be the "living God" who has given it. Resurrection is that which ever fills the vision of faith, and, in the power thereof, it can rise up from before the dead. There is much conveyed in this action of Abraham. We want to understand its meaning much more fully, because we are much too prone to be occupied with death and its consequences. Death is the boundary of Satan's power; but where Satan ends, God begins. Abraham understood this when he rose up and purchased the cave of Machpelah as a sleeping-place for Sarah. This was the expression of Abraham's thought in reference to the future. He knew that in the ages to come God's promise about the land of Canaan would be fulfilled, and he was able to lay the body of Sarah in the tomb "in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection."

The sons of Heth knew nothing about this. The thoughts which were filling the patriarch's soul were entirely foreign to the uncircumcised children of Heth. To them it seemed a small matter where he buried his dead, but it was by no means a small matter to him. "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight." It might, and manifestly did, appear strange to them to make so much ado about a grave; but, "beloved, the world knoweth us not, even as it knew Him not." The finest traits and characteristics of faith are those which are the most incomprehensible to the natural man. The Canaanites had no idea of the expecta-

tions which were giving character to Abraham's actings on this occasion. They had no idea that he was looking forward to the possession of the land, while he was merely looking for a spot in which, as a dead man, he might wait for God's time and God's manner, viz., the MORNING OF RESURRECTION. He felt *he* had no controversy with the children of Heth, and hence he was quite prepared to lay his head in the grave, and allow God to act for him and with him and by him.

"These all died in [or according to] faith [κατα πιστιν], not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." (Heb. xi. 13.) This is a truly-exquisite feature in the divine life. Those "witnesses" of whom the apostle is speaking in Heb. xi not merely lived by faith, but even when they arrived at the close of their career, they proved that the promises of God were as real and satisfying to their souls as when they first started. Now, I believe this purchase of a burying-place in the land was an exhibition of the power of faith, not only to live, but to die. Why was Abraham so particular about this purchase? Why was he so anxious to make good his claim to the field and cave of Ephron on righteous principles? Why so determined to weigh out the full price "current with the merchant"? FAITH is the answer. He did it all by faith. He knew the land was his in prospect, and that in resurrection-glory his seed should yet possess it, and until then

he would be no debtor to those who were yet to be dispossessed.

Thus we may view this beautiful chapter in a two-fold light;—first, as setting before us a plain, practical principle, as to our dealings with the men of this world; and secondly, as presenting the blessed hope which should ever animate the man of faith. Putting both these points together, we have an example of what the child of God should ever be. The hope set before us in the gospel is a glorious immortality; and this, while it lifts the heart above every influence of nature and the world, furnishes a high and holy principle with which to govern all our intercourse with those who are without. "We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." This is our hope. What is the moral effect of this? "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." (1 John iii. 2, 3.) If I am to be like Christ by and by, I shall seek to be as like Him now as I can; hence, the Christian should ever seek to walk in purity, integrity and moral grace, in the view of all around.

Thus it was with Abraham, in reference to the sons of Heth. His whole deportment and conduct, as set forth in our chapter, would seem to have been marked with very pure elevation and disinterestedness. He was "a mighty prince among them," and they would fain have done him a favor; but Abraham had learnt to take his favors only from the God of resurrection, and while he would pay *them* for

Machpelah, he would look to *Him* for Canaan. The sons of Heth knew well the value of "current money with the merchant," and Abraham knew the value of the cave of Machpelah. It was worth much more to him than it was to them. "The land was worth [to them,] four hundred shekels of silver," but to him it was priceless, as the earnest of an everlasting inheritance, which, because it was an everlasting inheritance, could only be possessed in the power of resurrection. Faith conducts the soul onward into God's future; it looks at things as He looks at them, and estimates them according to the judgment of the sanctuary. Therefore, in the intelligence of faith, Abraham stood up from before his dead, and purchased a burying-place, which significantly set forth his hope of resurrection, and an inheritance founded thereon.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE connection of this chapter with the two which precede it is worthy of notice. In chapter xxii, the son is offered up; in chapter xxiii, Sarah is laid aside; and in chapter xxiv, the servant is sent forth to procure a bride for him who had been, as it were, received from the dead in a figure. This connection, in a very striking manner, coincides with the order of events connected with the calling out of the Church. Whether this coincidence is to be regarded as of divine origin, will, it may be, raise a question

in the minds of some; but it must at least be regarded as not a little remarkable.

When we turn to the New Testament, the grand events which meet our view are, first, the rejection and death of Christ; secondly, the setting aside of Israel after the flesh; and, lastly, the calling out of the Church to occupy the high position of the bride of the Lamb.

Now all this exactly corresponds with the contents of this and the two preceding chapters. The death of Christ needed to be an accomplished fact ere the Church, properly so called, could be called out. "The middle wall of partition" needed to be broken down ere the "*one new man*" could be developed.

It is well to understand this in order that we may know the place which the Church occupies in the ways of God. So long as the Jewish economy subsisted, there was the most strict separation maintained between Jew and Gentile; and hence the idea of both being united in one new man was far removed from the mind of a Jew. He was led to view himself in a position of entire superiority to that of a Gentile, and to view the latter as utterly unclean, to whom it was unlawful to come in. (Acts x. 28.)

If Israel had walked with God according to the truth of the relationship into which He had graciously brought them, they would have continued in their peculiar place of separation and superiority; but this they did not do; and therefore, when they had filled up the measure of their iniquity, by crucifying the Lord of life and glory, and rejecting the

testimony of the Holy Ghost, we find St. Paul is raised up to be the minister of a new thing, which was held back in the counsels of God, while the testimony to Israel was going on. "For this cause I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you-ward; how that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery . . . . . which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, *as it is now* revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets [*i.e.*, New-Testament prophets, —τοις ἁγιοις αποστολοις αυτου και προφηταις,] by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel." (Eph. iii. 1–6.) This is conclusive. The mystery of the Church, composed of Jew and Gentile, baptized by one Spirit into one body, united to the glorious Head in the heavens, had never been revealed until Paul's day. Of this mystery the apostle goes on to say, "*I* was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power." (Ver. 7.) The apostles and prophets of the New Testament formed, as it were, the first layer of this glorious building. (See Eph. ii. 20.) This being so, it follows, as a consequence, that the building could not have been begun before. If the building had been going on from the days of Abel downwards, the apostle would then have said, The foundation of the Old-Testament saints. But he has not said so, and therefore we conclude that

whatever be the position assigned to the Old-Testament saints, they cannot possibly belong to a body which had no existence, save in the purpose of God, until the death and resurrection of Christ, and the consequent descent of the Holy Ghost. Saved they were, blessed be God,—saved by the blood of Christ, and destined to enjoy heavenly glory with the Church; but they could not have formed a part of that which did not exist for hundreds of years after their time.

It were easy to enter upon a more elaborate demonstration of this most important truth were this the place for so doing; but I shall now go on with our chapter, having merely touched upon a question of commanding interest, because of its being suggested by the position of the twenty-fourth of Genesis.

There may be a question in some minds as to whether we are to view this deeply-interesting portion of Scripture as a *type* of the calling out of the Church by the Holy Ghost. For myself, I feel happier in merely handling it as *an illustration* of that glorious work. We cannot suppose that the Spirit of God would occupy an unusually long chapter with the mere detail of a family compact, were that compact not typical or illustrative of some great truth. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning." This is emphatic. What, therefore, are we to learn from the chapter before us? I believe it furnishes us with a beautiful illustration or foreshadowing of the great mystery of the Church. It is important to see that while there is no direct revelation of this mystery in the Old

Testament, there are, nevertheless, scenes and circumstances which, in a very remarkable manner, shadow it forth; as, for example, the chapter before us. As has been remarked, the son being, in a figure, offered up and received again from the dead, —the original parent-stem, as it were, being laid aside,—the messenger is sent forth by the father to procure a bride for the son.

Now, in order to the clear and full understanding of the contents of the entire chapter, we may consider the following points; viz., first, *the oath;* second, *the testimony;* third, *the result.* It is beautiful to observe that the call and exaltation of Rebekah were founded upon the oath between Abraham and his servant. She knew nothing of this, though she was, in the purpose of God, so entirely the subject of it all. So is it exactly with the Church of God as a whole and each constituent part.—"In Thy book were all my members written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there were none of them" (Ps. cxxxix. 16.).—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ; according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Eph. i. 3, 4.).—"For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom

He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Rom. viii. 29, 30.). These scriptures are all in beautiful harmony with the point immediately before us. The call, the justification, and the glory of the Church, are all founded on the eternal purpose of God—His word and oath, ratified by the death, resurrection and exaltation of the Son. Far back, beyond the bounds of time, in the deep recesses of God's eternal mind, lay this wondrous purpose respecting the Church, which cannot by any means be separated from the divine thought respecting the glory of the Son. The oath between Abraham and the servant had for its object the provision of a partner for the son. It was the father's desire with respect to the son that led to all Rebekah's after-dignity. It is happy to see this,—happy to see how the Church's security and blessing stand inseparably connected with Christ and His glory. "For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man." (1 Cor. xi. 8, 9.) So it is in the beautiful parable of the marriage-supper—"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king which made a marriage for his son." (Matt. xxii. 2.) THE SON is the grand object of all the thoughts and counsels of God; and if any are brought into blessing or glory or dignity, it can only be in connection with Him. All title to these things, and even to life itself, was forfeited by sin; but Christ met all the penalty due to sin; He made Himself responsible for everything on behalf of His

body the Church; He was nailed to the cross as her representative; He bore her sins in His own body on the tree, and went down into the grave under the full weight of them. Hence, nothing can be more complete than the Church's deliverance from all that was against her. She is quickened out of the grave of Christ, where all her trespasses were laid. The life which she has is a life taken up at the other side of death, after every possible demand had been met. Hence, this life is connected with, and founded upon, divine righteousness, inasmuch as Christ's title to life is founded upon His having entirely exhausted the power of death; and He is the Church's life. Thus the Church enjoys divine life; she stands in divine righteousness; and the hope that animates her is the hope of righteousness. (See, amongst many other scriptures, John iii. 16, 36; v. 39, 40; vi. 27, 40, 47, 68; xi. 25; xvii. 2; Rom. v. 21; vi. 23; 1 Tim. i. 16; 1 John ii. 25; v. 20; Jude 21; Eph. ii. 1–6, 14, 15; Col. i. 12–22; ii. 10–15; Rom. i. 17; iii. 21–26; iv. 5, 23–25; 2 Cor. v. 21; Gal. v. 5.)

These scriptures most fully establish the three points, viz., the life, the righteousness, and the hope of the Church, all of which flow from her being one with Him who was raised from the dead. Now, nothing can be so calculated to assure the heart as the conviction that the Church's existence is essential to the glory of Christ.—"The woman is the glory of the man." (1 Cor. xi. 7.) And again, the Church is called "the fullness of Him that filleth all in all."

(Eph. i. 23.) This last is a remarkable expression. The word translated "fullness" means the complement—that which, being added to something else, makes up a whole. Thus it is that Christ the Head, and the Church the body, make up the "one new man." (Eph. ii. 15.) Looking at the matter in this point of view, it is no marvel that the Church should have been the object of God's eternal counsels. When we view her as the body, the bride, the companion, the counterpart, of His only begotten Son, we feel that there was, through grace, wondrous reason for her being so thought of before the foundation of the world. Rebekah was necessary to Isaac, and therefore she was the subject of secret counsel while yet in profound ignorance about her high destiny. All Abraham's thought was about Isaac. "I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take *a wife unto my son* of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell." Here we see that the all-important point was, "a wife unto my son." "It is not good that the man should be alone." This opens up a very deep and blessed view of the Church. In the counsels of God she is necessary to Christ; and, in the accomplished work of Christ, divine provision has been made for her being called into existence.

While occupied with such a character of truth as this, it is no longer a question as to whether God *can* save poor sinners; He actually wants to "make a marriage for His Son," and the Church is the

destined bride,—she is the object of the Father's purpose, the object of the Son's love, and of the testimony of the Holy Ghost. She is to be the sharer of all the Son's dignity and glory, as she is the sharer of all that love of which He has been the everlasting object. Hear His own words,—"And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me." (John xvii. 22, 23.) This settles the whole question. The words just quoted give us the thoughts of Christ's heart in reference to the Church. She is to be as He is, and not only so, but she is so even now, as St. John tells us, "Herein is love perfected with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, *so are we* in this world." (1 John iv. 17.) This gives full confidence to the soul. "We are in Him that is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." (1 John v. 20.) There is here no grouud for uncertainty. Everything is secured for the bride in the bridegroom. All that belonged to Isaac became Rebekah's because Isaac was hers; and so all that belongs to Christ is made available to the Church. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come—all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." (1 Cor. iii. 21–23.) Christ is "head over all things to the

Church." (Eph. i. 22.) It will be His joy throughout eternity to exhibit the Church in all the glory and beauty with which He has endowed her, for her glory and beauty will be but the reflection of His. Angels and principalities shall behold in the Church the marvelous display of the wisdom, power, and grace of God in Christ.

But we shall now look at the second point for consideration, viz., *the testimony*. Abraham's servant carried with him a very distinct testimony.—"And he said, 'I am Abraham's servant. And the Lord hath blessed my master greatly, and he is become great; and He hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and men-servants, and maid-servants, and camels, and asses. And Sarah, my master's wife, bare a son to my master when she was old; and unto him hath he given all that he hath.'" (Ver. 34–36.) He reveals the father and the son. Such was his testimony. He speaks of the vast resources of the father, and of the son's being endowed with all these in virtue of his being "the only begotten," and the object of the father's love. With this testimony he seeks to obtain a bride for the son.

All this, I need hardly remark, is strikingly illustrative of the testimony with which the Holy Ghost was sent from heaven upon the day of Pentecost.—"When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me." (John xv. 26.) Again, "Howbeit when

He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine and show it unto you. *All things that the Father hath are Mine;* therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine and shall show it unto you." (John xvi. 13–15.) The coincidence of these words with the testimony of Abraham's servant is instructive and interesting. It was by telling of Isaac that he sought to attract the heart of Rebekah; and it is, as we know, by telling of Jesus, that the Holy Ghost seeks to draw poor sinners away from a world of sin and folly, into the blessed and holy unity of the body of Christ. "He shall take of Mine and show it unto you." The Spirit of God will never lead any one to look at Himself or His work, but only and always at Christ. Hence, the more really spiritual any one is, the more entirely will he be occupied with Christ.

Some there are who regard it as a great mark of spirituality to be ever looking in at their own hearts, and dwelling upon what they find there, even though that be the work of the Spirit. This is a great mistake. So far from its being a proof of spirituality, it is a proof of the very reverse; for it is expressly declared of the Holy Ghost that "He shall not speak of Himself," but that, on the contrary, "He shall take of Mine and show it unto you." Therefore, whenever one is looking inward, and building on the evidences of the Spirit's work there, he may be as-

sured he is not led by the Spirit of God in so doing. It is by holding up Christ that the Spirit draws souls to God. This is very important. The knowledge of Christ is life eternal; and it is the Father's revelation of Christ, by the Holy Ghost, that constitutes the basis of the Church. When Peter confessed Christ to be the Son of the living God, Christ's answer was, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jonah; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter; and upon this rock *I will build* My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. xvi. 17, 18.) What rock? Peter? God forbid. "This rock" [ταυτη τη πετρα] simply means the Father's revelation of Christ, as the Son of the living God, which is the only means by which any one is introduced into the assembly of Christ. Now this opens to us very much the true character of the gospel. It is, pre-eminently and emphatically, a revelation,—a revelation not merely of a doctrine, but of a Person—the Person of the Son. This revelation being received by faith, draws the heart to Christ, and becomes the spring of life and power—the ground of membership—the power of fellowship. "When it pleased God . . . . to *reveal His Son* in me," etc. Here we have the true principle of "the rock," viz., God revealing His Son. It is thus the superstructure is reared up; and on this solid foundation it reposes, according to God's eternal purpose.

It is therefore peculiarly instructive to find in this

twenty-fourth of Genesis such a marked and beautiful illustration of the mission and special testimony of the Holy Ghost. Abraham's servant, in seeking to procure a bride for Isaac, sets forth all the dignity and wealth with which he had been endowed by the father; the love of which he was the object; and, in short, all that was calculated to affect the heart, and draw it off from present things. He showed Rebekah an object in the distance, and set before her the blessedness and reality of being made one with that beloved and highly-favored object. All that belonged to Isaac would belong to Rebekah too when she became part of him. Such was his testimony. Such, also, is the testimony of the Holy Ghost. He speaks of Christ, the glory of Christ, the beauty of Christ, the fullness of Christ, the grace of Christ, "the unsearchable riches of Christ," the dignity of His Person, and the perfectness of His work.

Moreover, He sets forth the amazing blessedness of being one with such a Christ,—"members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." Such is the Spirit's testimony always; and herein we have an excellent touchstone by which to try all sorts of teaching and preaching. The most spiritual teaching will ever be characterized by a full and constant presentation of Christ,—He will ever form the burden of such teaching. The Spirit cannot dwell on aught but Jesus. Of Him He delights to speak,—He delights in setting forth His attractions and excellencies. Hence, when a man is ministering by the power of the Spirit of God, there will always be

more of Christ than anything else in his ministry. There will be little room in such ministry for human logic and reasoning. Such things may do very well where a man desires to set forth himself; but the Spirit's sole object—be it well remembered by all who minister—will ever be to set forth Christ.

Let us now look, in the last place, at *the result* of all this. Truth, and the practical application of truth, are two very different things. It is one thing to speak of the peculiar glories of the Church, and quite another thing to be practically influenced by those glories. In Rebekah's case, the effect was most marked and decisive. The testimony of Abraham's servant sank down into her ears and into her heart, and entirely detached her heart's affections from the scene of things around her. She was ready to leave all and follow after, in order that she might apprehend that for which she had been apprehended. It was morally impossible that she could believe herself to be the subject of such high destinies and yet continue amid the circumstances of nature. If the report concerning the future were true, attachment to the present was the worst of folly. If the hope of being Isaac's bride, joint-heir with him of all his dignity and glory—if this were a reality, then to continue to tend Laban's sheep would be practically to despise all that God had, in grace, set before her.

But no, the prospect was far too bright to be thus lightly given up. True, she had not yet seen Isaac, nor yet the inheritance, but she had believed the report—the testimony of *him*, and had received, as it

were, the earnest of *it*, and these were enough for her heart; and hence she unhesitatingly arises and expresses her readiness to depart in the memorable words, "*I will go.*" She was fully prepared to enter upon an unknown path in companionship with one who had told her of an object far away, and of a glory connected with him, to which she was about to be raised. "I will go," said she; and, "forgetting the things which were behind, and reaching forth toward the things which were before, she pressed toward the mark for the prize of her high calling." Most touching and beautiful illustration this of the Church, under the conduct of the Holy Ghost, going onward to meet her heavenly Bridegroom. This is what the Church should be; but, alas! there is sad failure here. There is little of that holy alacrity in laying aside every weight and every entanglement, in the power of communion with the Holy Guide and Companion of our way, whose office and delight it is to take of the things of Jesus and show them unto us; just as Abraham's servant took of the things of Isaac and showed them to Rebekah: and no doubt, too, he found his joy in pouring fresh testimonies concerning the son into her ear, as they moved onward toward the consummation of all her joy and glory. Thus it is, at least with our heavenly Guide and Companion. He delights to tell of Jesus, "He shall take of Mine and show it unto you;" and again, "He shall show you things to come." Now this is what we really want—this ministry of the Spirit of God, unfolding Christ

to our souls, producing earnest longing to see Him as He is, and be made like Him forever. Naught but this will ever detach our hearts from earth and nature. What, save the hope of being associated with Isaac, would ever have led Rebekah to say, "I will go," when her "brother and her mother said, 'Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at least ten.'" And so with us: nothing but the hope of seeing Jesus as He is, and being like Him, will ever enable or lead us to purify ourselves, even as He is pure.

CHAPTER XXV

IN the opening of this chapter, Abraham's second marriage is set before us, an event not without its interest to the spiritual mind, when viewed in connection with what we have been considering in the preceding chapter. With the light furnished by the prophetic scriptures of the New Testament, we understand that after the completion and taking up of the elect bride of Christ, the seed of Abraham will again come into notice. Thus, after the marriage of Isaac, the Holy Ghost takes up the history of Abraham's seed by a new marriage, together with other points in his history, and that of his seed, according to the flesh. I do not press any special interpretation of all this; I merely say that it is not without its interest.

We have already referred to the remark of some

one on the book of Genesis, namely, that it is "full of the seeds of things;" and as we pass along its comprehensive pages, we shall find them teeming with all the fundamental principles of truth, which are more elaborately wrought out in the New Testament. True, in Genesis these principles are set forth illustratively, and in the New Testament didactically; still, the illustration is deeply interesting, and eminently calculated to bring home the truth with power to the soul.

At the close of this chapter, we are presented with some principles of a very solemn and practical nature. Jacob's character and actings will hereafter, if the Lord will, come more fully before us; but I would just notice, ere passing on, the conduct of Esau in reference to the birthright, and all which it involved. The natural heart places no value on the things of God. To it, God's promise is a vague, valueless, powerless thing, simply because God is not known. Hence it is that present things carry such weight and influence in man's estimation. Anything that man can *see*, he values, because he is governed by sight and not by faith. To him, the present is everything; the future is a mere uninfluential thing—a matter of the merest uncertainty. Thus it was with Esau. Hear his fallacious reasoning,—"Behold, I am at the point to die; and what profit shall this birthright do to me? What strange reasoning!—*The present* is slipping from beneath my feet, I will therefore despise and entirely let go the *future!*—Time is fading from my view, I will

therefore abandon all interest in eternity! "Thus Esau despised his birthright:" thus Israel despised the pleasant land (Ps. cvi. 24.); thus they despised Christ (Zech. xi. 13.): thus those who were bidden to the marriage despised the invitation (Matt. xxii. 5.). Man has no heart for the things of God. The present is everything to him. A mess of pottage is better than a title to Canaan. Hence, the very reason why Esau made light of the birthright was the very reason why he ought to have grasped it with the greater intensity. The more clearly I see the vanity of man's present, the more I shall cleave to God's future. Thus it is in the judgment of faith, "Seeing, then, that *all these things shall be dissolved*, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, *according to His promise*, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (2 Pet. iii. 11–13.) These are the thoughts of God, and therefore the thoughts of faith. The things that are seen shall be dissolved. What! then, are we to despise the unseen? By no means. The present is rapidly passing away. What is our resource? "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God." This is the judgment of the renewed mind; and any other judgment is only that of "a profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright." (Heb. xii. 16.) The Lord keep

us judging of things as He judges. This can only be done by faith.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE opening verse of this chapter connects itself with chapter xii. "There was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham." The trials which meet God's people in their course are very much alike, and they ever tend to make manifest how far the heart has found its *all* in God. It is a difficult matter—a rare attainment—so to walk in sweet communion with God as to be rendered thereby entirely independent of things and people here. The Egypts and the Gerars which lie on our right hand and on our left present great temptations, either to turn aside out of the right way, or to stop short of our true position as servants of the true and living God.

"And Isaac went unto Abimelech, king of the Philistines, unto Gerar." There is a manifest difference between Egypt and Gerar. Egypt is the expression of the world in its natural resources and its independence of God. "My river is mine own," is the language of an Egyptian who knew not Jehovah, and thought not of looking to Him for aught. Egypt was, locally, further removed from Canaan than Gerar; and, morally, it expresses a condition of soul further from God. Gerar is thus referred to in chapter x.—"And the border of the Canaanites

was from Sidon, as thou comest to Gerar, unto Gaza; as thou goest unto Sodom, and Gomorrah, and Admah, and Zeboim, even unto Lasha." (Ver. 19.) We are informed that "from Gerar to Jerusalem was three days' journey." It was, therefore, as compared with Egypt, an advanced position; but still it lay within the range of very dangerous influences. Abraham got into trouble there, and so does Isaac in this chapter, and that, too, in the very same way. Abraham denied his wife, and so does Isaac. This is peculiarly solemn. To see both the father and the son fall into the same evil, in the same place, tells us plainly that the influence of that place was not good.

Had Isaac not gone to Abimelech, king of Gerar, he would have no necessity for denying his wife; but the slightest divergence from the true line of conduct superinduces spiritual weakness. It was when Peter stood and warmed himself at the high-priest's fire that he denied his Master. Now, it is manifest that Isaac was not really happy in Gerar. True, the Lord says unto him, "Sojourn in this land;" but how often does the Lord give directions to His people morally suitable to the condition He knows them to be in, and calculated also to arouse them to a true sense of that condition? He directed Moses, in Numbers xiii, to send men to search the land of Canaan; but had they not been in a low moral condition, such a step would not have been necessary. We know well that faith does not need "*to spy out*" when God's promise lies before us.

Again, He directed Moses to choose out seventy elders to help him in the work; but had Moses fully entered into the dignity and blessedness of his position, he would not have needed such a direction. So, in reference to the setting up of a king, in 1 Samuel viii;—they ought not to have needed a king. Hence, we must always take into consideration the condition of an individual or a people to whom a direction is given before we can form any correct judgment as to the direction.

But again it may be said, If Isaac's position in Gerar was wrong, how do we read, "Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received the same year a hundred fold; and the Lord blessed him"? (Ver. 12.) I reply, we can never judge that a person's condition is right because of prosperous circumstances. We have had already to remark that there is a great difference between the Lord's presence and His blessing. Many have the latter without the former; and, moreover, the heart is prone to mistake the one for the other—prone to put the blessing for the presence, or at least to argue that the one must ever accompany the other. This is a great mistake. How many do we see surrounded by God's blessings, who neither have nor wish for God's presence? It is important to see this. A man may "wax great, and go forward, and grow until he becomes very great, and have possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants," and all the while not have the full unhindered joy of the Lord's presence with him. Flocks and herds

are not the Lord. They are things on account of which the Philistines might envy Isaac, whereas they never would have envied him on account of the Lord's presence. He might have been enjoying the sweetest and richest communion with God, and the Philistines have thought nothing whatever about it, simply because they had no heart to understand or appreciate such a reality. Flocks, herds, servants, and wells of water they could appreciate; but the divine presence they could not appreciate.

However, Isaac at length makes his way from amongst the Philistines, and gets up to Beersheba. "And *the Lord appeared unto him* the same night, and said, 'I am the God of Abraham thy father; fear not, for *I am with thee*, and will bless thee.'" (Ver. 24.) Mark, it was not the Lord's blessing merely, but the Lord Himself. And why? Because Isaac had left the Philistines, with all their envy and strife and contention, behind, and gone up to Beersheba. Here the Lord could show Himself to His servant. The blessings of His liberal hand might follow him during his sojourn in Gerar, but His presence could not there be enjoyed. To enjoy God's presence, we must be where He is, and He certainly is not to be found amid the strife and contention of an ungodly world; and hence, the sooner the child of God gets away from all such, the better. So Isaac found it. He had no rest in his own spirit; and he assuredly did not, in any wise, serve the Philistines by his sojourn amongst them. It is a very common error to imagine that we serve the men

of this world by mixing ourselves up with them in their associations and ways. The true way to serve them is to stand apart from them in the power of communion with God, and thus show them the pattern of a more excellent way.

Mark the progress in Isaac's soul, and the moral effect of his course.—"He went up from thence," "the Lord appeared unto him," "he builded an altar," "he called on the name of the Lord," "he pitched his tent," "his servants digged a well." Here we have most blessed progress. The moment he took a step in the right direction, he went from strength to strength. He entered into the joy of God's presence—tasted the sweets of true worship, and exhibited the character of a stranger and pilgrim, and found peaceful refreshment—an undisputed well, which the Philistines could not stop because they were not there.

These were blessed results in reference to Isaac himself; and now observe the effect produced upon others.—"Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath, one of his friends, and Phicol, the chief captain of his army. And Isaac said unto them, "Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you?' And they said, 'We saw certainly that the Lord was with thee; and we said, Let there now be an oath betwixt us,'" etc. The true way to act on the hearts and consciences of the men of the world is to stand in decided separation from them, while dealing in perfect grace toward them. So long as Isaac con-

tinued in Gerar, there was nothing but strife and contention. He was reaping sorrow for himself, and producing no effect whatever upon those around him. On the contrary, the moment he went away from them, their hearts were touched, and they followed him and desired a covenant. This is very instructive. The principle unfolded here may be seen constantly exemplified in the history of the children of God. The first point with the heart should ever be, to see that in our position we are *right with God;* and not only right in position, but in the moral condition of the soul. When we are right with God, we may expect to act salutarily upon men. The moment Isaac got up to Beersheba, and took his place as a worshiper, his own soul was refreshed, and he was used of God to act upon others. So long as we continue in a low position, we are robbing ourselves of blessing, and failing totally in our testimony and service.

Nor should we, when in a wrong position, stop to inquire, as we so often do, Where can I find anything better? God's order is, "Cease to do evil;" and when we have acted upon that holy precept, we are furnished with another, namely, "Learn to do well." If we expect to "learn" how "to do well" before we "cease to do evil," we are entirely mistaken. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from among the dead [εκ των νεκρων]." And what then? "Christ shall give thee light." (Eph. v. 14.)

My beloved reader, if you are doing what you know to be wrong, or if you are identified in any

way with what you own to be contrary to Scripture, hearken to the word of the Lord,—"Cease to do evil;" and, be assured, when you have yielded obedience to this word, you will not long be left in ignorance as to your path. It is sheer unbelief that leads us to say, I cannot cease to do evil, until I find something better. The Lord grant us a single eye and a docile spirit.

CHAPTERS XXVII—XXXV

THESE chapters present to us the history of Jacob —at least, the principal scenes in that history. The Spirit of God here sets before us the deepest instruction,—first, as to God's purpose of infinite grace; and secondly, as to the utter worthlessness and depravity of human nature.

There is a passage in chapter xxv which I purposely passed over, in order to take it up here, so that we might have the truth in reference to Jacob fully before us,—"And Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. And the children struggled together within her; and she said, 'If it be so, why am I thus?' And she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said unto her, 'Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other

people; and the elder shall serve the younger.'" This is referred to in Malachi, where we read, "'I have loved you,' saith the Lord; 'yet ye say, Wherein hast Thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother?' saith the Lord; 'yet I have loved Jacob, and hated Esau.'" This is again referred to in Romans IX,—"(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth;) it was said unto her, 'The elder shall serve the younger.' As it is written, 'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.'"

Thus we have very distinctly before us, God's eternal purpose according to *the election of grace.* There is much involved in this expression. It banishes all human pretension from the scene, and asserts God's right to act as He will. This is of the very last importance. The creature can enjoy no real blessedness until he is brought to bow his head to sovereign grace. It becomes him so to do, inasmuch as he is a sinner, and, as such, utterly without claim to act or dictate. The great value of finding one's self on this ground is, that it is then no longer a question of what we deserve to get, but simply of what God is pleased to give. The prodigal might talk of being a servant, but he really did not deserve the place of a servant, if it were to be made a question of desert; and therefore he had only to take what the father was pleased to give, and that was. the very highest place, even the place of fel-

lowship with himself. Thus it must ever be.—

"Grace all the work shall crown,
Through everlasting days."

Happy for us that it is so. As we go on, day by day, making fresh discoveries of ourselves, we need to have beneath our feet the solid foundation of God's grace: nothing else could possibly sustain us in our growing self-knowledge. The ruin is hopeless, and therefore the grace must be infinite: and infinite it is, having its source in God Himself, its channel in Christ, and the power of application and enjoyment in the Holy Ghost. The Trinity is brought out in connection with the grace that saves a poor sinner. "Grace reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." It is only in redemption that this reign of grace could be seen. We may see in creation the reign of wisdom and power; we may see in providence the reign of goodness and long-suffering; but only in redemption do we see the reign of grace, and that, too, on the principle of righteousness.

Now, we have, in the person of Jacob, a most striking exhibition of the power of divine grace; and for this reason, that we have in him a striking exhibition of the power of human nature. In him we see nature in all its obliquity, and therefore we see grace in all its moral beauty and power. From the facts of his remarkable history, it would seem that before his birth, at his birth, and after his birth the extraordinary energy of nature was seen. Before his birth, we read, "the children struggled to-

gether within her;" at his birth, we read, "his hand took hold on Esau's heel;" and after his birth—yea, to the turning-point of his history, in chapter xxxii, without any exception—his course exhibits nothing but the most unamiable traits of nature; but all this only serves, like a dark back-ground, to throw into relief the grace of Him who condescends to call Himself by the peculiarly-touching name, "The God of Jacob"—a name most sweetly expressive of free grace.

Let us now examine the chapters consecutively. Chapter xxvii exhibits a most humbling picture of sensuality, deceit and cunning; and when one thinks of such things in connection with the people of God, it is sad and painful to the very last degree. Yet how true and faithful is the Holy Ghost! He must tell all out: He cannot give us a partial picture. If He gives us a history of man, He must describe man as he is, and not as he is not.

So, if He unfolds to us the character and ways of God, He gives us God as He is. And this, we need hardly remark, is exactly what we need. We need the revelation of One perfect in holiness, yet perfect in grace and mercy; who could come down into all the depth of man's need, his misery and his degradation, and deal with him there, and raise him up out of it into full, unhindered fellowship with Himself in all the reality of what He is. This is what Scripture gives us. God knew what we needed, and He has given it to us, blessed be His name!

And be it remembered, that in setting before us,

in faithful love, all the traits of man's character, it is simply with a view to magnify the riches of divine grace, and to admonish our souls. It is not, by any means, in order to perpetuate the memory of sins, forever blotted out from His sight. The blots, the failures, and the errors of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have been perfectly washed away, and they have taken their place amid "the spirits of just men made perfect;" but their history remains, on the page of inspiration, for the display of God's grace, and for the warning of God's people in all ages; and, moreover, that we may distinctly see that the blessed God has not been dealing with perfect men and women, but with those of "like passions as we are,"—that He has been walking and bearing with the same failures, the same infirmities, the same errors, as those over which we mourn every day.

This is peculiarly comforting to the heart; and it may well stand in striking contrast with the way in which the great majority of human biographies are written, in which, for the most part, we find, not the history of men, but of beings devoid of error and infirmity. Such histories have rather the effect of discouraging than of edifying those who read them. They are rather histories of what men ought to be, than of what they really are, and they are therefore useless to us—yea, not only useless, but mischievous.

Nothing can edify save the presentation of God dealing with man as he really is; and this is what the Word gives us. The chapter before us illustrates this very fully. Here we find the aged patriarch

Isaac, standing, as it were, at the very portal of eternity, the earth and nature fast fading away from his view, yet occupied about "savory meat," and about to act in direct opposition to the divine counsel, by blessing the elder instead of the younger. Truly this was nature, and nature with its "eyes dim." If Esau had sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, Isaac was about to give away the blessing for a mess of venison. How very humiliating!

But God's purpose must stand, and He will do all His pleasure. Faith knows this, and, in the power of that knowledge, can wait for God's time. This, nature never can do, but must set about gaining its own ends, by its own inventions. These are the two grand points brought out in Jacob's history—God's purpose of grace, on the one hand; and on the other, nature plotting and scheming to reach what that purpose would have infallibly brought about, without any plot or scheme at all. This simplifies Jacob's history amazingly, and not only simplifies it, but heightens the soul's interest in it also. There is nothing, perhaps, in which we are so lamentably deficient, as in the grace of patient, self-renouncing dependence upon God. Nature will be working in some shape or form, and thus, so far as in it lies, hindering the outshining of divine grace and power. God did not need the aid of such elements as Rebekah's cunning and Jacob's gross deceit, in order to accomplish His purpose. He had said, "The elder shall serve the younger." This was enough—enough for faith, but not enough for nature, which

must ever adopt its own ways, and know nothing of what it is to wait on God.

Now, nothing can be more truly blessed than the position of hanging in childlike dependence upon God, and being entirely content to wait for His time. True, it will involve trial; but the renewed mind learns some of its deepest lessons, and enjoys some of its sweetest experiences, while waiting on the Lord; and the more pressing the temptation to take ourselves out of His hands, the richer will be the blessing of leaving ourselves there. It is so exceedingly sweet to find ourselves wholly dependent upon one who finds infinite joy in blessing us. It is only those who have tasted, in any little measure, the reality of this wondrous position that can at all appreciate it. The only one who ever occupied it perfectly and uninterruptedly was the Lord Jesus Himself. He was ever dependent upon God, and utterly rejected every proposal of the enemy to be anything else. His language was, "In Thee do I put My trust;" and again, "I was cast upon Thee from the womb." Hence, when tempted by the devil to make an effort to satisfy His hunger, His reply was, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.'" When tempted to cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple, His reply was, "It is written again, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.'" When tempted to take the kingdoms of the world from the hand of another than God, and by doing homage to another than Him,

His reply was, "It is written, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.'" In a word, nothing could allure the perfect man from the place of absolute dependence upon God. True, it was God's purpose to sustain His Son; it was His purpose that He should suddenly come to His temple; it was His purpose to give Him the kingdoms of this world; but this was the very reason why the Lord Jesus would simply and uninterruptedly wait on God for the accomplishment of His purpose, in His own time and in His own way. He did not set about accomplishing His own ends: He left Himself thoroughly at God's disposal. He would only eat when God gave Him bread; He would only enter the temple when sent of God; He will ascend the throne when God appoints the time.—"Sit Thou at My right hand, *until I make* Thy foes Thy footstool." (Ps. cx.)

This profound subjection of the Son to the Father is admirable beyond expression. Though entirely equal with God, He took, as man, the place of dependence, rejoicing always in the will of the Father; giving thanks even when things seemed to be against Him; doing always the things which pleased the Father; making it His grand and unvarying object to glorify the Father; and finally, when all was accomplished, when He had perfectly finished the work which the Father had given, He breathed His spirit into the Father's hand, and His flesh rested in hope of the promised glory and exaltation. Well, therefore, may the inspired apostle say, "Let this

mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. ii. 5–11.)

How little Jacob knew, in the opening of his history, of this blessed mind! How little was he prepared to wait for God's time and God's way!—he much preferred Jacob's time and Jacob's way. He thought it much better to arrive at the blessing and the inheritance by all sorts of cunning and deception than by simple dependence upon and subjection to God, whose electing grace had promised, and whose almighty power and wisdom would assuredly accomplish all for him.

But, oh, how well one knows the opposition of the human heart to all this! Any attitude for it save that of patient waiting upon God. It is almost enough to drive nature to distraction to find itself bereft of all resource but God. This tells us, in language not to be misunderstood, the true character of human nature. In order to know what nature

is, I need not travel into those scenes of vice and crime which justly shock all refined moral sense. No; all that is needful is just to try it for a moment in the place of dependence, and see how it will carry itself there. It really knows nothing of God, and therefore cannot trust Him; and herein lies the secret of all its misery and moral degradation. It is totally ignorant of the true God, and can therefore be naught else but a ruined and worthless thing. The knowledge of God is the source of life—yea, is itself life; and until a man has life, what is he? or what can he be?

Now, in Rebekah and Jacob, we see nature taking advantage of nature in Isaac and Esau. It was really this. There was no waiting upon God whatever. Isaac's eyes were dim, he could therefore be imposed upon, and they set about doing so, instead of looking to God, who would have entirely frustrated Isaac's purpose to bless the one whom God would not bless—a purpose founded in nature, and most unlovely nature, for "Isaac loved Esau," not because he was the first-born, but "because he did eat of his venison." How humiliating!

But we are sure to bring unmixed sorrow upon ourselves when we take ourselves, our circumstances, or our destinies out of the hands of God.* Thus it was with Jacob, as we shall see in the sequel. It has been observed by another, that "whoever observes Jacob's life, after he had surreptitiously

*We should ever remember, in a place of trial, that what we want is not a change of circumstances, but victory over self.

obtained his father's blessing, will perceive that he enjoyed very little worldly felicity. His brother purposed to murder him, to avoid which he was forced to flee from his father's house; his uncle Laban deceived him, as he had deceived his father, and treated him with great rigor; after a servitude of twenty-one years, he was obliged to leave him in a clandestine manner, and not without danger of being brought back, or murdered by his enraged brother; no sooner were these fears over, than he experienced the baseness of his son Reuben, in defiling his bed; he had next to bewail the treachery and cruelty of Simeon and Levi towards the Shechemites; then he had to feel the loss of his beloved wife; he was next imposed upon by his own sons, and had to lament the supposed untimely end of Joseph; and, to complete all, he was forced by famine to go into Egypt, and there died in a strange land. So just, wonderful, and instructive are all the ways of providence."

This is a true picture, so far as Jacob was concerned; but it only gives us one side, and that the gloomy side. Blessed be God, there is a bright side likewise, for God had to do with Jacob; and, in every scene of his life, when Jacob was called to reap the fruits of his own plotting and crookedness, the God of Jacob brought good out of evil, and caused His grace to abound over all the sin and folly of His poor servant. This we shall see as we proceed with his history.

I shall just offer a remark here upon Isaac, Re-

bekah and Esau. It is very interesting to observe how, notwithstanding the exhibition of nature's excessive weakness, in the opening of this twenty-seventh chapter, Isaac maintains, by faith, the dignity which God had conferred upon him. He blesses with all the consciousness of being endowed with power to bless. He says, "I have blessed him; yea, and he shall be blessed. . . . Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him; and what shall I do now unto thee, my son?" He speaks as one who, by faith, had at his disposal all the treasures of earth. There is no false humility, no taking a low ground by reason of the manifestation of nature. True, he was on the eve of making a grievous mistake—even of moving right athwart the counsel of God; still, he knew God, and took his place accordingly, dispensing blessings in all the dignity and power of faith.—"I have blessed him; yea, and he shall be blessed. . . . . With corn and wine have I sustained him." It is the proper province of faith to rise above all one's own failure and the consequences thereof, into the place where God's grace has set us.

As to Rebekah, she was called to feel all the sad results of her cunning actings. She no doubt imagined she was managing matters most skillfully; but, alas! she never saw Jacob again: so much for management! How different it would have been had she left the matter entirely in the hands of God! This is the way in which faith manages, and it is

ever a gainer. "Which of you by taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?" We gain nothing by our anxiety and planning; we only shut out God, and that is no gain. It is a just judgment from the hand of God to be left to reap the fruits of our own devices; and I know of few things more sad than to see a child of God so entirely forgetting his proper place and privilege as to take the management of his affairs into his own hands. The birds of the air and the lilies of the field may well be our teachers when we so far forget our position of unqualified dependence upon God.

Then, again, as to Esau, the apostle calls him "a profane person, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright," and "afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of change of mind, though he sought it carefully with tears." Thus we learn what a profane person is, viz., one who would like to hold both worlds,—one who would like to enjoy the present without forfeiting his title to the future. This is by no means an uncommon case. It expresses to us the mere worldly professor, whose conscience has never felt the action of divine truth, and whose heart has never felt the influence of divine grace.

CHAPTER XXVIII

WE are now called to trace Jacob in his movement from under his father's roof, to view him as a homeless and lonely wanderer on the earth.

It is here that God's special dealings with him commence. Jacob now begins to realize, in some measure, the bitter fruit of his conduct in reference to Esau; while, at the same time, God is seen rising above all the weakness and folly of His servant, and displaying His own sovereign grace and profound wisdom in His dealings with him. God will accomplish His own purpose, no matter by what instrumentality; but if His child, in impatience of spirit and unbelief of heart, will take himself out of His hands, he must expect much sorrowful exercise and painful discipline. Thus it was with Jacob: he might not have had to flee to Haran had he allowed God to act for him. God would assuredly have dealt with Esau, and caused him to find his destined place and portion; and Jacob might have enjoyed that sweet peace which nothing can yield save entire subjection in all things to the hand and counsel of God.

But here is where the excessive feebleness of our hearts is constantly disclosed. We do not lie passive in God's hand,—we will be acting; and, by our acting, we hinder the display of God's grace and power on our behalf. "*Be still* and know that I am God," is a precept which naught, save the power of divine grace, can enable one to obey. "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand [εγγυς]. Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." What will be the result of thus acting? "The peace

of God, which passeth all understanding, shall garrison [φρουρησει] your hearts and minds by Christ Jesus." (Phil. iv. 5–7.)

However, God graciously overrules our folly and weakness, and while we are called upon to reap the fruits of our unbelieving and impatient ways, He takes occasion from them to teach our hearts still deeper lessons of His own tender grace and perfect wisdom. This, while it assuredly affords no warrant whatever for unbelief and impatience, does most wonderfully exhibit the goodness of our God, and comfort the heart even while we may be passing through the painful circumstances consequent upon our failure. God is above all; and, moreover, it is His special prerogative to bring good out of evil,—to make the eater yield meat, and the strong yield sweetness; and hence, while it is quite true that Jacob was compelled to be an exile from his father's roof in consequence of his own restless and deceitful acting, it is equally true that he never could have learnt the meaning of "Bethel" had he been quietly at home. Thus the two sides of the picture are strongly marked in every scene of Jacob's history. It was when he was driven, by his own folly, from Isaac's house, that he was led to taste, in some measure, the blessedness and solemnity of "God's house."

"And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place and put

them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep." Here we find the homeless wanderer just in the very position in which God could meet him, and in which He could unfold His purposes of grace and glory. Nothing could possibly be more expressive of helplessness and nothingness than Jacob's condition as here set before us. Beneath the open canopy of heaven, with a pillow of stone, in the helpless condition of sleep. Thus it was that the God of Bethel unfolded to Jacob His purposes respecting him and his seed. "And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And behold the Lord stood above it, and said, 'I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south; and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.'"

Here we have, indeed, "grace and glory." The ladder "set *on the earth*" naturally leads the heart to meditate on the display of God's grace, in the Person and work of His Son. On the earth it was that the wondrous work was accomplished which forms the basis—the strong and everlasting basis—

of all the divine counsels in reference to Israel, the Church, and the world at large. On the earth it was that Jesus lived, labored and died; that, through His death, He might remove out of the way every obstacle to the accomplishment of the divine purpose of blessing to man.

But "the top of the ladder reached to heaven." It formed the medium of communication between heaven and earth; and "behold the angels of God ascending and descending upon it,"—striking and beautiful picture of Him by whom God has come down into all the depth of man's need, and by whom also He has brought man up and set him in his own presence forever, in the power of divine righteousness! God has made provision for the accomplishment of all His plans, despite of man's folly and sin; and it is for the everlasting joy of any soul to find itself, by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, within the limits of God's gracious purpose.

The prophet Hosea leads us on to the time when that which was foreshadowed by Jacob's ladder shall have its full accomplishment.—"And in that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground; and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. And I will betroth thee unto Me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness and in judgment and in loving-kindness and in mercies; I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness, and thou shalt

know the Lord. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn and the wine and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel. And I will sow her unto Me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not My people, Thou art My people; and they shall say, Thou art my God." (Hosea ii. 18–23.) There is also an expression in the first chapter of John, bearing upon Jacob's remarkable vision; it is Christ's word to Nathanael—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." (Ver. 51.)

Now this vision of Jacob's is a very blessed disclosure of divine grace to Israel. We have been led to see something of Jacob's real character, something, too, of his real condition; both were evidently such as to show that it should either be divine grace for him, or nothing. By birth he had no claim; nor yet by character. Esau might put forward some claim on both these grounds (*i.e.*, provided God's prerogative were set aside), but Jacob had no claim whatsoever; and hence, while Esau could only stand upon the exclusion of God's prerogative, Jacob could only stand upon the introduction and establishment thereof. Jacob was such a sinner, and so utterly divested of all claim, both by birth and by practice, that he had nothing whatever to rest upon save God's purpose of pure, free, and sovereign grace. Hence,

in the revelation which the Lord makes to His chosen servant in the passage just quoted, it is a simple record or prediction of what He Himself would yet do. "*I* am . . . . *I* will give . . . . *I* will keep . . . . . *I* will bring . . . . . *I* will not leave thee until *I* have done that which *I* have spoken to thee of." It was all Himself. There is no condition whatever,—no *if* or *but;* for when *grace* acts, there can be no such thing. Where there is an *if*, it cannot possibly be grace. Not that God cannot put man into a position of responsibility, in which He must needs address him with an "if." We know He can; but Jacob asleep on a pillow of stone was not in a position of responsibility, but of the deepest helplessness and need; and therefore he was in a position to receive a revelation of the fullest, richest, and most unconditional grace.

Now, we cannot but own the blessedness of being in such a condition that we have nothing to rest upon save God Himself; and, moreover, that it is in the most perfect establishment of God's own character and prerogative that we obtain all our true joy and blessing. According to this principle, it would be an irreparable loss to us to have any ground of our own to stand upon; for in that case, God should address us on the ground of responsibility, and failure would then be inevitable. Jacob was so bad, that none but God Himself could do for him.

And be it remarked, that it was his failure in the habitual recognition of this that led him into so

much sorrow and pressure. God's revelation of Himself is one thing, and our resting in that revelation is quite another. God shows Himself to Jacob, in infinite grace; but no sooner does Jacob awake out of sleep, than we find him developing his true character, and proving how little he knew, practically, of the blessed One who had just been revealing Himself so marvelously to him. "He was afraid, and said, 'How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.'" His heart was not at home in the presence of God; nor can any heart be so until it has been thoroughly emptied and broken. God is at home, blessed be His name, with a broken heart, and a broken heart at home with Him. But Jacob's heart was not yet in this condition; nor had he yet learnt to repose, like a little child, in the perfect love of one who could say, "Jacob have I loved." "Perfect love casteth out fear;" but where such love is not known and fully realized, there will always be a measure of uneasiness and perturbation. God's house and God's presence are not dreadful to a soul who knows the love of God as expressed in the perfect sacrifice of Christ: such a soul is rather led to say, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honor dwelleth." (Ps. xxvi. 8.) And again, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple." (Ps. xxvii. 4.) And again, "How

amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord." (Ps. lxxxiv.) When the heart is established in the knowledge of God, it will assuredly love His house, whatever the character of that house may be,—whether it be Bethel, or the temple at Jerusalem, or the Church now composed of all true believers, "builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." However, Jacob's knowledge both of God and His house was very shallow at that point in his history on which we are now dwelling.

We shall have occasion again to refer to some principles connected with Bethel, and shall now close our meditations upon this chapter with a brief notice of Jacob's bargain with God, so truly characteristic of him, and so demonstrative of the truth of the statement with respect to the shallowness of his knowledge of the divine character. "And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God, and this stone which I have set for a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee.'" Observe, "*If* God will be with me." Now, the Lord had just said, emphatically, "I *am* with thee, and *will keep thee in all places* whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land," etc. And yet poor Jacob's heart cannot get beyond an "*if;*" nor, in its thoughts of God's goodness, can it rise higher than "bread to eat and raiment to put

on." Such were the thoughts of one who had just seen the magnificent vision of the ladder reaching from earth to heaven, with the Lord standing above, and promising an innumerable seed and an everlasting possession. Jacob was evidently unable to enter into the reality and fullness of God's thoughts. He measured God by himself, and thus utterly failed to apprehend Him. In short, Jacob had not yet really got to the end of himself; and hence he had not really begun with God.

CHAPTERS XXIX—XXXI

"THEN Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east." As we have just seen, in chapter xxviii Jacob utterly fails in the apprehension of God's real character, and meets all the rich grace of Bethel with an "if," and a miserable bargain about food and raiment. We now follow him into a scene of thorough bargain-making. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." There is no possibility of escaping from this. Jacob had not yet found his true level in the presence of God, and therefore God uses circumstances to chasten and break him down.

This is the real secret of much, very much, of our sorrow and trial in the world. Our hearts have never been really broken before the Lord,—we have never been self-judged and self-emptied; and hence, again and again, we, as it were, knock our heads against

the wall. No one can really enjoy God until he has got to the bottom of self, and for this plain reason, that God has begun the display of Himself at the very point at which the end of flesh is seen. If, therefore, I have not reached the end of my flesh, in the deep and positive experience of my soul, it is morally impossible that I can have anything like a just apprehension of God's character. But I must, in some way or other, be conducted to the true measure of nature. To accomplish this end, the Lord makes use of various agencies, which, no matter what they are, are only effectual when used by Him for the purpose of disclosing, in our view, the true character of all that is in our hearts. How often do we find, as in Jacob's case, that even although the Lord may come near to us and speak in our ears, yet we do not understand His voice or take our true place in His presence. "The Lord is in this place, and I knew it not . . . . How dreadful is this place!" Jacob learnt nothing by all this, and it therefore needed twenty years of terrible schooling, and that, too, in a school marvelously adapted to his flesh; and even that, as we shall see, was not sufficient to break him down.

However, it is remarkable to see how he gets back into an atmosphere so entirely suited to his moral constitution. The bargain-making Jacob meets with the bargain-making Laban, and they are both seen, as it were, straining every nerve to outwit each other. Nor can we wonder at Laban, for he had never been at Bethel,—he had seen no open heaven, with a

ladder reaching from thence to earth,—he had heard no magnificent promises from the lips of Jehovah, securing to him all the land of Canaan, with a countless seed: no marvel, therefore, that he should exhibit a grasping groveling spirit; he had no other resource. It is useless to expect from worldly men aught but a worldly spirit, and worldly principles and ways; they have gotten naught superior, and you cannot bring a clean thing out of an unclean. But to find Jacob, after all he had seen and heard at Bethel, struggling with a man of the world, and endeavoring, by such means, to accumulate property, is peculiarly humbling.

And yet, alas! it is no uncommon thing to find the children of God thus forgetting their high destinies and heavenly inheritance, and descending into the arena with the children of this world, to struggle there for the riches and honors of a perishing, sin-stricken earth. Indeed, to such an extent is this true in many instances, that it is often hard to trace a single evidence of that principle which St. John tells us "overcometh the world." Looking at Jacob and Laban, and judging of them upon natural principles, it would be hard to trace any difference. One should get behind the scenes, and enter into God's thoughts about both, in order to see how widely they differed. But it was God that had made them to differ, not Jacob; and so it is now. Difficult as it may be to trace any difference between the children of light and the children of darkness, there is, nevertheless, a very wide difference indeed,—a difference founded

on the solemn fact that the former are "the vessels of mercy, which God has afore prepared unto glory," while the latter are "the vessels of wrath, fitted [not by God, but by sin] to destruction."* (Rom. ix. 22, 23.) This makes a very serious difference. The Jacobs and the Labans differ materially, and have differed, and will differ forever, though the former may so sadly fail in the realization and practical exhibition of their true character and dignity.

Now, in Jacob's case, as set forth in the three chapters now before us, all his toiling and working, like his wretched bargain before, is the result of his

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*It is deeply interesting to the spiritual mind to mark how sedulously the Spirit of God, in Romans ix, and indeed throughout all scripture, guards against the horrid inference which the human mind draws from the doctrine of God's election. When He speaks of "vessels of wrath," He simply says, "fitted to destruction;" He does not say that God "fitted" them. Whereas, on the other hand, when He refers to "the vessels of mercy," He says, "whom *He* had afore prepared unto glory." This is most marked.

If my reader will turn for a moment to Matthew xxv. 34–41, he will find another striking and beautiful instance of the same thing. When the King addresses those on His right hand, He says, "Come, ye *blessed of My Father*, inherit the kingdom *prepared for you* from the foundation of the world." (Verse 34.) But when He addresses those on His left, He says, "Depart from Me, ye cursed." He does not say, Cursed of My Father. And further, He says, "Into everlasting fire, prepared [not for *you*, but] for the devil and his angels." (Verse 41.)

In a word, then, it is plain that God has "prepared" a kingdom of glory, and "vessels of mercy" to inherit that kingdom; but He has not prepared "everlasting fire" for men, but for "the devil and his angels;" nor has He fitted the "vessels of wrath," but they have fitted themselves.

The Word of God as clearly establishes "*election*" as it sedulously guards against "*reprobation*." Every one who finds himself in heaven will have to thank God for it, and every one that finds himself in hell will have to thank himself.

ignorance of God's grace, and his inability to put implicit confidence in God's promise. The man that could say, after a most unqualified promise from God to give him the whole land of Canaan, "IF God will give me food to eat and raiment to put on," could have had but a very faint apprehension of who God was, or what His promise was either; and because of this, we see him seeking to do the best he can for himself. This is always the way when grace is not understood: the principles of grace may be professed, but the real measure of our experience of the power of grace is quite another thing. One would have imagined that Jacob's vision had told him a tale of grace; but God's revelation at Bethel, and Jacob's actings at Haran, are two very different things; yet the latter tell out what was Jacob's sense of the former. Character and conduct prove the real measure of the soul's experience and conviction, whatever the profession may be. But Jacob had never yet been brought to measure himself in God's presence, and therefore he was ignorant of grace, and he proved his ignorance by measuring himself with Laban, and adopting his maxims and ways.

One cannot help remarking the fact that inasmuch as Jacob failed to learn and judge the inherent character of his flesh before God, therefore he was, in the providence of God, led into the very sphere in which that character was fully exhibited in its broadest lines. He was conducted to Haran, the country of Laban and Rebekah, the very school from whence

those principles, in which he was such a remarkable adept, had emanated, and where they were taught, exhibited and maintained. If one wanted to learn what God was, he should go to Bethel; if to learn what man was, he should go to Haran. But Jacob had failed to take in God's revelation of Himself at Bethel, and he therefore went to Haran, and there showed what he was,—and oh, what scrambling and scraping! what shuffling and shifting! There is no holy and elevated confidence in God, no simply looking to and waiting on Him. True, God was with Jacob—for nothing can hinder the outshinings of divine grace. Moreover, Jacob in a measure owns God's presence and faithfulness; still nothing can be done without a scheme and a plan. Jacob cannot allow God to settle the question as to his wives and his wages, but seeks to settle all by his own cunning and management. In short, it is "the supplanter" throughout. Let the reader turn, for example, to chapter xxx. 37–42, and say where he can find a more masterly piece of cunning. It is verily a perfect picture of Jacob. In place of allowing God to multiply "the ringstraked, speckled, and spotted cattle," as He most assuredly would have done had He been trusted, he sets about securing their multiplication by a piece of policy which could only have found its origin in the mind of a Jacob. So in all his actings, during his twenty years' sojourn with Laban; and finally, he most characteristically "steals away," thus maintaining in everything his consistency with himself.

Now, it is in tracing out Jacob's real character, from stage to stage of his extraordinary history, that one gets a wondrous view of divine grace. None but God could have borne with such an one, as none but God would have taken such an one up. Grace begins at the very lowest point,—it takes up man as he is, and deals with him in the full intelligence of what he is. It is of the very last importance to understand this feature of grace at one's first starting; it enables us to bear, with steadiness of heart, the after-discoveries of personal vileness, which so frequently shake the confidence and disturb the peace of the children of God.

Many there are who, at first, fail in the full apprehension of the utter ruin of nature, as looked at in God's presence, though their hearts have been attracted by the grace of God, and their consciences tranquilized, in some degree, by the application of the blood of Christ. Hence, as they get on in their course, they begin to make deeper discoveries of the evil within, and, being deficient in their apprehensions of God's grace, and the extent and efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ, they immediately raise a question as to their being children of God at all. Thus they are taken off Christ and thrown on themselves, and then they either betake themselves to ordinances in order to keep up their tone of devotion, or else fall back into thorough worldliness and carnality. These are disastrous consequences, and all the result of not having "the heart established in grace."

It is this that renders the study of Jacob's history so profoundly interesting and eminently useful. No one can read the three chapters now before us and not be struck at the amazing grace that could take up such an one as Jacob, and not only take him up, but say, after the full discovery of all that was in him, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel." (Numb. xxiii. 21.) He does not say that iniquity and perverseness were not in him. This would never give the heart confidence—the very thing, above all others, which God desires to give. It could never assure a poor sinner's heart to be told that there was *no sin in* him; for, alas! he knows too well there is; but to be told there is no sin *on* him, and that, moreover, in God's sight, on the simple ground of Christ's perfect sacrifice, must infallibly set his heart and conscience at rest. Had God taken up Esau, we should not have had, by any means, such a blessed display of grace; for this reason, that he does not appear before us in the unamiable light in which we see Jacob. The more man sinks, the more God's grace rises. As my debt rises, in my estimation, from the fifty pence up to the five hundred, so my sense of grace rises also—my experience of that love which, when we "had *nothing* to pay," could "frankly forgive" us all. (Luke vii. 42.) Well might the apostle say, "It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein." (Heb. xiii. 9.)

CHAPTER XXXII

"AND Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him." Still God's grace follows him, notwithstanding all. "Nothing changeth God's affection." Whom He loves, and how He loves, He loves to the end. His love is like Himself—"the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." But how little effect "God's host" had upon Jacob may be seen by his actings, as here set before us. "And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother, unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom." He evidently feels uneasy in reference to Esau, and not without reason. He had treated him badly, and his conscience was not at ease; but instead of casting himself unreservedly upon God, he betakes himself to his usual planning again, in order to avert Esau's wrath. He tries to *manage* Esau, instead of leaning on God.

"And he commanded them, saying, 'Thus shall ye speak unto *my lord* Esau: *Thy servant* Jacob saith thus: I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now.'" All this bespeaks a soul very much off its centre in God. "My lord," and "thy servant," is not like the language of a brother, or of one in the conscious dignity of the presence of God; but it was the language of Jacob, and of Jacob, too, with a bad conscience.

"And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying,

'We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him.' Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed." But what does he first do? Does he at once cast himself upon God? No; he begins to manage. "He divided the people that was with him, and the flocks and herds and the camels, into two bands; and said, 'If Esau come to the one company and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.'" Jacob's first thought was always *a plan*, and in this we have a true picture of the poor human heart. True, he turns to God after he makes his plan, and cries to Him for deliverance; but no sooner does he cease praying than he resumes the planning. Now, praying and planning will never do together. If I plan, I am leaning more or less on my plan; but when I pray, I should lean exclusively upon God. Hence, the two things are perfectly incompatible,—they virtually destroy each other. When my eye is filled with my own management of things, I am not prepared to see God acting for me; and, in that case, prayer is not the utterance of my need, but the mere superstitious performance of something which I think ought to be done, or it may be, asking God to sanctify my plans. This will never do. It is not asking God to sanctify and bless my means, but it is asking Him to do it all Himself.*

Though Jacob asked God to deliver him from his

*No doubt, when faith allows God to act, He will use His own agency; but this is a totally different thing from His owning and blessing the plans and arrangements of unbelief and impatience. This distinction is not sufficiently understood.

brother Esau, he evidently was not satisfied with that, and therefore he tried to "appease him with a present." Thus his confidence was in the "present," and not entirely in God. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." It is often hard to detect what is the real ground of the heart's confidence. We imagine, or would fain persuade ourselves, that we are leaning upon God, when we are, in reality, leaning upon some scheme of our own devising. Who, after hearkening to Jacob's prayer, wherein he says, "Deliver me, I pray Thee, from the hand of my brother—from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children," could imagine him saying, "I will appease him with a present." Had he forgotten his prayer? was he making a god of his present? did he place more confidence in a few cattle than in Jehovah, to whom he had just been committing himself? These are questions which naturally arise out of Jacob's actings in reference to Esau, and we can readily answer them by looking into the glass of our own hearts. There we learn, as well as on the page of Jacob's history, how much more apt we are to lean on our own management than on God; but it will not do; we must be brought to see the end of our management, that it is perfect folly, and that the true path of wisdom is to repose in full confidence upon God.

Nor will it do to make our prayers part of our management. We often feel very well satisfied with ourselves when we add prayer to our arrangement,

or when we have used all lawful means, and called upon God to bless them. When this is the case, our prayers are worth about as much as our plans, inasmuch as we are leaning upon them instead of upon God. We must be really brought to the end of everything with which self has aught to do; for until then, God cannot show Himself. But we can never get to the end of our plans until we have been brought to the end of ourselves. We must see that "all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field." (Isaiah xl. 6.)

Thus it is in this interesting chapter: when Jacob had made all his prudent arrangements, we read, "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." This is a turning-point in the history of this very remarkable man. To be left alone with God is the only true way of arriving at a just knowledge of ourselves and our ways. We can never get a true estimate of nature and all its actings until we have weighed them in the balance of the sanctuary, and there we ascertain their real worth. No matter what we may think about ourselves, nor yet what man may think about us; the great question is, What does God think about us? and the answer to this question can only be heard when we are "left alone." Away from the world; away from self; away from all the thoughts, reasonings, imaginations, and emotions of mere nature, and "alone" with God,—thus, and thus alone, can we get a correct judgment about ourselves.

"Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him." Mark, it was not Jacob wrestling with a man, but a man wrestling with Jacob. This scene is very commonly referred to as an instance of Jacob's power in prayer. That it is not this is evident from the simple wording of the passage. My wrestling with a man, and a man wrestling with me, present two totally different ideas to the mind. In the former case, I want to gain some object from him; in the latter, he wants to gain some object from me. Now, in Jacob's case, the divine object was to bring him to see what a poor, feeble, worthless creature he was; and when Jacob so pertinaciously held out against the divine dealing with him, "He touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as He wrestled with him." The sentence of death must be written on the flesh—the power of the cross must be entered into before we can steadily and happily walk with God. We have followed Jacob so far, amid all the windings and workings of his extraordinary character—we have seen him planning and managing during his twenty years' sojourn with Laban; but not until he "was left alone" did he get a true idea of what a perfectly helpless thing he was in himself. Then, the seat of his strength being touched, he learnt to say, "I will not let *Thee* go."

> "Other refuge have I none;
> Clings my helpless soul to Thee."

This was a new era in the history of the supplanting, planning Jacob. Up to this point he had held fast

by his own ways and means; but now he is brought to say, "I will not let *Thee* go." Now, let my reader remark, that Jacob did not express himself thus until "the hollow of his thigh was touched." This simple fact is quite sufficient to settle the true interpretation of the whole scene. God was wrestling with Jacob to bring him to this point. We have already seen that, as to Jacob's power in prayer, he had no sooner uttered a few words to God than he let out the real secret of his soul's dependence, by saying, "I will appease him (Esau) with a present." Would he have said this if he had really entered into the meaning of prayer, or true dependence upon God? Assuredly not. If he had been looking to God alone to appease Esau, could he have said, "I will appease him with a present"? Impossible. God and the creature must be kept distinct, and will be kept so in every soul that knows much of the sacred reality of a life of faith.

But, alas! here is where we fail (if one may speak for another). Under the plausible and apparently pious formula of using means, we really cloke the positive infidelity of our poor deceitful hearts; we think we are looking to God to bless our means, while, in reality, we are shutting Him out by leaning on the means instead of leaning on Him. Oh! may our hearts be taught the evil of thus acting. May we learn to cling more simply to God *alone*, that so our history may be more characterized by that holy elevation above the circumstances through which we are passing. It is not, by any means, an easy mat-

ter so to get to the end of the creature, in every shape and form, so as to be able to say, "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." To say this from the heart, and to abide in the power of it, is the secret of all true strength. Jacob said it when the hollow of his thigh was touched; but not till then. He struggled long, ere he gave way, because his confidence in the flesh was strong. But God can bring down to the dust the stoutest character. He knows how to touch the spring of nature's strength, and write the sentence of death thoroughly upon it; and until this is done, there can be no real "power with God or man." We must be "weak" ere we can be "strong." "The power of Christ" can only "rest on us" in connection with the knowledge of our infirmities. Christ cannot put the seal of His approval upon nature's strength, its wisdom, or its glory: all these must sink that He may rise. Nature can never form, in any one way, a pedestal on which to display the grace or power of Christ; for if it could, then might flesh glory in His presence; but this, we know, can never be.

And inasmuch as the display of God's glory and God's name or character is connected with the entire setting aside of nature, so, until this latter is set aside, the soul can never enjoy the disclosure of the former. Hence, though Jacob is called to tell out his name,—to own that his name is "Jacob," or a "supplanter," he yet receives no revelation of the name of Him who had been wrestling with him, and bringing him down into the dust. He received for

himself the name of "Israel," or "prince," which was a great step in advance; but when he says, "Tell me, I pray Thee, Thy name," he received the reply, "Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after My name?" The Lord refuses to tell His name, though He had elicited from Jacob the truth as to himself, and He blesses him accordingly. How often is this the case in the annals of God's family! There is the disclosure of self in all its moral deformity; but we fail to get hold practically of what God is, though He has come so very close to us, and blessed us, too, in connection with the discovery of ourselves. Jacob received the new name of "Israel" when the hollow of his thigh had been touched;—he became a mighty "prince" when he had been brought to know himself as a weak man; but still the Lord had to say, "Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after My name?" There is no disclosure of the name of Him who, nevertheless, had brought out the real name and condition of Jacob.

From all this we learn that it is one thing to be blessed by the Lord, and quite another thing to have the revelation of His character, by the Spirit, to our hearts. "He blessed him there," but He did not tell His name. There is blessing in being brought, in any measure, to know ourselves; for therein we are led into a path in which we are able more clearly to discern what God is to us in detail. Thus it was with Jacob. When the hollow of his thigh was touched, he found himself in a condition in which it was either God or nothing. A poor halting man

could do little, it therefore behoved him to cling to one who was almighty.

I would remark, ere leaving this chapter, that the book of Job is, in a certain sense, a detailed commentary on this scene in Jacob's history. Throughout the first thirty-one chapters, Job grapples with his friends, and maintains his point against all their arguments; but in chapter xxxii, God, by the instrumentality of Elihu, begins to wrestle with him; and in chapter xxxviii, He comes down upon him directly with all the majesty of His power, overwhelms him by the display of His greatness and glory, and elicits from him the well-known words, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Chap. xlii. 5, 6.) This was really touching the hollow of his thigh. And mark the expression, "Mine eye seeth *Thee*." He does not say, "I see myself" merely; no; but "Thee." Nothing but a view of what God is can really lead to repentance and self-loathing. Thus it will be with the people of Israel, whose history is very analagous with that of Job. When they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, they will mourn, and then there will be full restoration and blessing. Their latter end, like Job's, will be better than their beginning. They will learn the full meaning of that word, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help." (Hosea xiii. 9.)

WE may here see how groundless were all Jacob's fears, and how useless all his plans. Notwithstanding the wrestling, the touching the hollow of the thigh, and the halting, we find Jacob still planning.—"And Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids. And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost." This arrangement proved the continuance of his fears. He still anticipated vengeance from the hand of Esau, and he exposed those about whom he cared least to the first stroke of that vengeance. How wondrous are the depths of the human heart! How slow it is to trust God! Had Jacob been really leaning upon God, he never could have anticipated destruction for himself and his family; but, alas! the heart knows something of the difficulty of simply reposing, in calm confidence, upon an ever-present, all-powerful, and infinitely-gracious God.

But mark, now, the thorough vanity of the heart's anxiety. "And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him; and they wept." The present was quite unnecessary—the plan, useless. God "appeased" Esau, as

He had already appeased Laban. Thus it is He ever delights to rebuke our poor, coward, unbelieving hearts, and put to flight all our fears. Instead of the dreaded sword of Esau, Jacob meets his embrace and kiss;—instead of strife and conflict, they mingle their tears. Such are God's ways. Who would not trust Him?—who would not honor Him with the heart's fullest confidence? Why is it that, notwithstanding all the sweet evidences of His faithfulness to those who put their trust in Him, we are so ready, on every fresh occasion, to doubt and hesitate? The answer is simple,—We are not sufficiently acquainted with God. "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace." (Job xxii. 21.) This is true, whether in reference to the unconverted sinner or to the child of God. The true knowledge of God—real acquaintance with Him, is life and peace. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." (John xvii. 3.) The more intimate our acquaintance with God, the more solid will be our peace, and the more will our souls be lifted above every creature dependence. "God is a rock," and we only need to lean our whole weight upon Him, to know how ready and how able He is to sustain us.

After all this manifestation of God's goodness, we find Jacob settling down in Succoth, and, contrary to the spirit and principles of a pilgrim life, building a house, as if it were his home. Now, Succoth was evidently not his divinely-appointed destination. The Lord had not said to him, I am the God of

Succoth; no; but, "I am the God of Bethel." Bethel, therefore, and not Succoth, should have been Jacob's grand object. But, alas! the heart is always prone to rest satisfied with a position and portion short of what God would graciously assign.

Jacob then moves on to Shechem, and purchases ground, still falling short of the divine mark, and the name by which he calls his altar is indicative of the moral condition of his soul. He calls it "El-elohe-Israel," or, "God, the God of Israel." This was taking a very contracted view of God. True, it is our privilege to know God as our God; but it is a higher thing to know Him as the God of His own house, and to view ourselves as part of that house. It is the believer's privilege to know Christ as *his* Head; but it is a higher thing to know Him as the Head of His body the Church, and to know ourselves as members of that body.

We shall see, when we come to chapter xxxv, that Jacob is led to take a higher and a wider view of God; but at Shechem he was manifestly on low ground, and he was made to smart for it, as is always the case when we stop short of God's own ground. The two tribes and a half took up their position on this side of Jordan, and they were the first to fall into the enemy's hand. So it was with Jacob. We see, in chapter xxxiv, the bitter fruits of his sojourn at Shechem. There is a blot cast upon his family, which Simeon and Levi attempt to wipe out, in the mere energy and violence of nature, which only led to still deeper sorrow; and that,

too, which touched Jacob still more keenly than the insult offered to his daughter.—"And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, 'Ye have troubled *me*, to make *me* to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and *I* being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against *me*, and slay *me;* and *I* shall be destroyed, *I* and my house." Thus, it was the consequences in reference to himself that affected Jacob most. He seems to have walked in constant apprehension of danger to himself or his family, and in the manifestation of an anxious, a cautious, timid, calculating spirit, utterly incompatible with a life of genuine faith in God.

It is not that Jacob was not, in the main, a man of faith; he assuredly was, and as such, gets a place amongst the "cloud of witnesses" in Hebrews xi: but then he exhibited sad failure from not walking in the habitual exercise of that divine principle. Could faith have led him to say, "I shall be destroyed, I and my house"? Surely not. God's promise in chapter xxviii. 14, 15, should have banished every fear from his poor timid spirit.—"I will keep thee . . . . . I will not leave thee." This should have tranquilized his heart. But the fact is, his mind was more occupied with his danger among the Shechemites than with his security in the hand of God. He ought to have known that not a hair of his head could be touched, and therefore, instead of looking at Simeon and Levi, or the consequences of their rash acting, he should have judged himself for

being in such a position at all. If he had not settled at Shechem, Dinah would not have been dishonored, and the violence of his sons would not have been exhibited. We constantly see Christians getting into deep sorrow and trouble through their own unfaithfulness; and then, instead of judging themselves, they begin to look at circumstances, and to cast upon them the blame.

How often do we see Christian parents, for instance, in keen anguish of soul about the wildness, unsubduedness, and worldliness of their children; and, all the while, they have mainly to blame themselves for not walking faithfully before God in reference to their family. Thus was it with Jacob. He was on low moral ground at Shechem; and, inasmuch as he lacked that refined sensibility which would have led him to detect the low ground, God, in very faithfulness, used his circumstances to chastise him. "God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." This is a principle flowing out of God's moral government,—a principle, from the application of which none can possibly escape; and it is a positive mercy to the children of God that they are obliged to reap the fruits of their errors. It is a mercy to be taught, in any way, the bitterness of departing from, or stopping short of, the living God. We must learn that this is not our rest; for, blessed be God, He would not give us a polluted rest. He would ever have us resting *in* and *with* Himself. Such is His perfect grace; and when our hearts wander or fall

short, His word is, "If thou wilt return, return *unto Me.*" False humility, which is simply the fruit of unbelief, would lead the wanderer or backslider to take lower ground, not knowing the principle or measure of God's restoration. The prodigal would seek to be made a servant, not knowing that, so far as he was concerned, he had no more title to the place of a servant than to that of a son; and, moreover, that it would be utterly unworthy of the father's character to put him in such a position. We must come to God on a principle and in a manner worthy of Himself, or not at all.

CHAPTER XXXV

"AND God said unto Jacob, 'Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there.'" This confirms the principle on which we have been dwelling. When there is failure or declension, the Lord calls the soul back to Himself. "Remember, therefore, *from whence thou art fallen;* and repent, and do *the first works.*" (Rev. ii. 5.) This is the divine principle of restoration. The soul must be recalled to the very highest point,—it must be brought back to the divine standard. The Lord does not say, Remember where you are; no; but, "Remember the lofty position from whence you have fallen." Thus only can one learn how far he has declined, and how he is to retrace his steps.

Now, it is when thus recalled to God's high and

holy standard, that one is really led to see the sad evil of one's fallen condition. What a fearful amount of moral evil had gathered round Jacob's family, unjudged by him, until his soul was roused by the call to "go up to Bethel." Shechem was not the place in which to detect all this evil. The atmosphere of that place was too much impregnated with impure elements to admit of the soul's discerning, with any degree of clearness and precision, the true character of evil. But the moment the call to Bethel fell on Jacob's ear, "then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, 'Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean and change your garments, and let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.'" The very mention of "the house of God" struck a chord in the soul of the patriarch; it carried him, in the twinkling of an eye, over the history of twenty eventful years. It was at Bethel he had learnt what God was, and not at Shechem; hence he must get back to Bethel again, and erect an altar upon a totally different base, and under a totally different name, from his altar at Shechem. This latter was connected with a mass of uncleanness and idolatry.

Jacob could speak of "El-elohe-Israel" while surrounded by a quantity of things utterly incompatible with the holiness of the house of God. It is important to be clear in reference to this point. Nothing can keep the soul in a path of consistent,

intelligent separation from evil save the sense of what "the house of God" is, and what becomes that house. If I merely look at God in reference to myself, I shall not have a clear, full, divine sense of all that flows out of a due recognition of God's relation to His house. Some there are who deem it a matter of no importance how they are mixed up with impure materials in the worship of God, provided they themselves are true and upright in heart. In other words, they think they can worship God at Shechem, and that an altar named "El-elohe-Israel" is just as elevated—just as much according to God—as an altar named "El-Bethel." This is evidently a mistake. The spiritually-minded reader will at once detect the vast moral difference between Jacob's condition at Shechem, and his condition at Bethel; and the same difference is observable between the two altars. Our ideas in reference to the worship of God must, of necessity, be affected by our spiritual condition; and the worship which we present will be low and contracted, or elevated and comprehensive, just in proportion as we enter into the apprehension of His character and relationship.

Now, the name of our altar and the character of our worship express the same idea. El-Bethel worship is higher than El-elohe-Israel worship, for this simple reason, that it conveys a higher idea of God. It gives me a more elevated thought of God to speak of Him as the God of His house than as the God of a solitary individual. True, there is beautiful grace expressed in the title, "God, the God of Israel,"

and the soul must ever feel happy in looking at the character of God as graciously connecting Himself with every separate stone of His house and every separate member of the body. Each stone in the building of God is a "lively stone," as connected with the "living stone," having communion with the "living God," by the power of "the Spirit of life." But while all this is blessedly true, God is the God of His house; and when we are enabled, by an enlarged spiritual intelligence, to view Him as such, we enjoy a higher character of worship than that which flows from merely apprehending what He is to ourselves individually.

But there is another thing to be remarked in Jacob's recall to Bethel. He is told to make an altar "unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother." He is thus reminded of "the day of his distress." It is often well to have our minds led in this way to the point in our history in which we found ourselves brought down to the lowest step of the ladder. Thus Saul is brought back to the time when he was "little in his own eyes." This is the true starting-point with all of us. "When thou wast little in thine own eyes," is a point of which we often need to be reminded. It is then that the heart really leans on God. Afterwards we begin to fancy ourselves to be something, and the Lord is obliged to teach us afresh our own nothingness. When first one enters upon a path of service or testimony, what a sense there is of personal weakness and incapacity!

and, as a consequence, what leaning upon God! what earnest, fervent appeals to Him for help and strength! Afterwards we begin to think that, from being so long at the work, we can get on by ourselves,—at least, there is not the same sense of weakness, or the same simple dependence upon God; and then our ministry becomes a poor, meagre, flippant, wordy thing, without unction or power —a thing flowing, not from the exhaustless tide of the Spirit, but from our own wretched minds.

From ver. 9–15, God renews His promise to Jacob, and confirms the new name of "prince," instead of "supplanter;" and Jacob again calls the name of the place "Bethel." At verse 18 we have an interesting example of the difference between the judgment of faith and the judgment of nature. The latter looks at things through the hazy mist with which it is surrounded; the former looks at them in the light of the presence and counsels of God.— "And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died,) that she called his name Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin." Nature called him "The son of my sorrow;" but faith called him "The son of the right hand." Thus is it ever. The difference between the thoughts of nature and those of faith must ever be wide indeed; and we should earnestly desire that our souls should be governed only by the latter, and not by the former.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Furnishes a catalogue of Esau's sons, with their various titles and localities. We shall not dwell on this, but pass on to one of the most fruitful and interesting sections in the entire canon of inspiration, viz.,—

CHAPTERS XXXVII—L

On which we shall dwell more particularly. There is not in Scripture a more perfect and beautiful type of Christ than Joseph. Whether we view Christ as the object of the Father's love, the object of the envy of "His own,"—in His humiliation, sufferings, death, exaltation and glory—in all, we have Him strikingly typified by Joseph.

In chapter xxxvii we have Joseph's dreams, the statement of which draws out the enmity of his brethren. He was the object of his father's love, and the subject of very high destinies, and, inasmuch as the hearts of his brethren were not in communion with these things, they hated him. They had no fellowship in the father's love, and they would not yield to the thought of Joseph's exaltation. In all this they represent the Jews in Christ's day. "He came to His own, and His own received Him not." He had "no form nor comeliness" in their eyes. They would neither own Him as the Son of God, nor King of Israel. Their eyes were

not open to behold "His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." They would not have Him,—yea, they hated Him.

Now, in Joseph's case, we see that he in no wise relaxed his testimony in consequence of his brethren's refusal of his first dream.—"And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brethren; and they hated him yet the more . . . . . And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it to his brethren." This was simple testimony founded upon divine revelation; but it was testimony which brought Joseph down to the pit. Had he kept back his testimony, or taken off aught of its edge and power, he might have spared himself; but no; he told them the truth, and therefore they hated him.

Thus was it with Joseph's great Antitype. He bore witness to the truth—He witnessed a good confession—He kept back nothing—He could only speak the truth because He was *the* truth, and His testimony to the truth was answered, on man's part, by the cross, the vinegar, the soldier's spear. The testimony of Christ, too, was connected with the deepest, fullest, richest grace. He not only came as "the truth," but also as the perfect expression of all the love of the Father's heart: "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." He was the full disclosure to man of what God was; hence man was left entirely without excuse. He came and showed God to man, and man hated God with a perfect hatred. The fullest exhibition of divine love was answered by the fullest exhibition of human hatred.

This is seen in the cross; and we have it touchingly foreshadowed at the pit into which Joseph was cast by his brethren.

"And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. And they said one to another, 'Behold, this dreamer cometh; come now, therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit; and we will say, some evil beast hath devoured him; and we shall see what will become of his dreams.'" These words forcibly remind us of the parable in Matthew xxi,—"But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, 'They will reverence my son.' But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.' And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him." God sent His Son into the world with this thought, "They will reverence My Son;" but, alas! man's heart had no reverence for the "well-beloved" of the Father;—they cast Him out. Earth and heaven were at issue in reference to Christ, and they are at issue still. *Man* crucified Him; but *God* raised Him from the dead. Man placed Him on a cross between two thieves; God set Him at His own right hand in the heavens. Man gave Him the very lowest place on earth; God gave Him the very highest place in heaven, in brightest majesty.

All this is shown out in Joseph's history. "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall. The archers

have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him; but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel;) even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts and of the womb: the blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors, unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills; they shall be upon the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren." (Gen. xlix. 22–26.)

These verses beautifully exhibit to our view "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." "The archers" have done their work; but God was stronger than they. The true Joseph has been shot at and grievously wounded in the house of his friends; but "the arms of his hands have been made strong" in the power of resurrection, and faith now knows Him as the basis of all God's purposes of blessing and glory in reference to the Church, Israel, and the whole creation. When we look at Joseph in the pit and in the prison, and look at him afterwards as ruler over all the land of Egypt, we see the difference between the thoughts of God and the thoughts of men; and so when we look at the cross, and at "the throne of the Majesty in the heavens," we see the same thing.

Nothing ever brought out the real state of man's

heart toward God but the coming of Christ. "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin." (John xv. 22.) It is not that they would not have been sinners. No; but "they had not had sin." So He says, in another place, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin." (John ix. 41.) God came near to man in the Person of His Son, and man was able to say, "This is the heir;" but yet he said, "Come, let us kill Him." Hence, "they have no cloak for their sin." Those who say they see, have no excuse. *Confessed blindness* is not at all the difficulty, but *professed sight*. This is a truly-solemn principle for a professing age like the present. The permanence of sin is connected with the mere profession to see. A man who is blind, and knows it, can have his eyes opened; but what can be done for one who thinks he sees, when he really does not?

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Presents one of those remarkable circumstances in which divine grace is seen gloriously triumphing over man's sin. "It is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda." (Heb. vii. 14.) But how? "Judas begat Phares and Zara of *Thamar*." (Matt. i. 3.) This is peculiarly striking. God, in His great grace, rising above the sin and folly of man, in order to bring about His own purposes of love and mercy. Thus, a little further on in Matthew, we read.

"David the king begat Solomon, of her that had been the wife of Urias." It is worthy of God thus to act. The Spirit of God is conducting us along the line through which, according to the flesh, Christ came; and, in doing so, He gives us, as links in the genealogical chain, Tamar and Bathsheba! How evident it is that there is nothing of man in this! How plain it is that when we reach the close of the first chapter of Matthew, it is "God manifest in the flesh" we find, and that, too, from the pen of the Holy Ghost! Man could never have devised such a genealogy. It is entirely divine; and no spiritual person can read it without seeing in it a blessed exhibition of divine grace, in the first place, and of the divine inspiration of Matthew's gospel, in the second place, at least of his account of Christ's genealogy according to the flesh. I believe a comparison of 2 Samuel xi and Genesis xxxviii with Matthew i will furnish the thoughtful Christian with matter for a very sweet and edifying meditation.

CHAPTERS XXXIX—XLV

IN perusing these interesting sections of inspiration, we perceive a remarkable chain of providential actings, all tending to one grand point, namely, the *exaltation of the man who had been in the pit;* and, at the same time, bringing out, by the way, a number of subordinate objects. "The

thoughts of many hearts" were to be "revealed;" but Joseph was to be exalted. "He called for a famine upon the land: He brake the whole staff of bread. He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant; whose feet they hurt with fetters; he was laid in iron; until the time that His word came; the word of the Lord tried him. The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people, and let him go free. He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance; to bind his princes at his pleasure, and teach his senators wisdom." (Psalm cv. 16–22.)

It is well to see that the leading object was to exalt the one whom men had rejected, and then to produce in those same men a sense of their sin in rejecting. And how admirably all this is effected! The most trivial and the most important, the most likely and the most unlikely, circumstances are made to minister to the development of God's purposes. In chapter xxxix, Satan uses Potiphar's wife; and in chapter xl, he uses Pharaoh's chief butler. The former he used to put Joseph into the dungeon; and the latter he used to keep him there, through his ungrateful negligence; but all in vain. God was behind the scenes. His finger was guiding all the springs of the vast machine of circumstances; and when the due time was come, He brought forth the man of His purpose, and set his feet in a large room. Now this is ever God's prerogative. He is above all, and can use all for the accomplishment of His grand and unsearchable designs. It is sweet

to be able thus to trace our Father's hand and counsel in everything;—sweet to know that all sorts of agents are at His sovereign disposal: angels, men and devils—all are under His omnipotent hand, and all are made to carry out His purposes.

In the scripture now before us, all this is seen in a most remarkable manner. God visits the domestic circle of a heathen captain, the household of a heathen king,—yea, and his bedside, and makes the very visions of his head upon his bed contribute to the development of His counsels. Nor is it merely individuals and their circumstances that we see thus taken up and used for the furtherance of God's ends; but Egypt and all the surrounding countries are brought into the scene; in short, the whole earth was prepared by the hand of God to be a theatre on which to display the glory and greatness of the one "who was separate from his brethren." Such are God's ways; and it is one of the happiest and most elevating exercises for the soul of a saint to trace thus the admirable actings of his heavenly Father. How forcibly is God's providence brought out in this profoundly interesting history of Joseph! Look, for a moment, into the dungeon of the captain of the guard. See there a man "laid in iron," charged with a most abominable crime, the outcast and off-scouring of society; and yet see him, almost in a moment, raised to the very highest eminence; and who can deny that God is in it all?

"And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, 'Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so dis-

creet and wise as thou art; thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled; only in the throne will I be greater than thou.' And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, 'See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.' And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck. And he made him to ride in the second chariot that he had; and they cried before him, 'Bow the knee'; and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, 'I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.'' (Chap. xli. 39–44.)

Here, then, was exaltation of no ordinary kind. Contrast this with the pit and the dungeon; and mark the chain of events by which it was all brought about, and you have, at once, a marked exhibition of the hand of God, and a striking type of the sufferings and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Joseph was taken from the pit and the dungeon, into which he had been brought by the envy of his brethren, and the false judgment of the Gentile, to be ruler over the whole land of Egypt; and not only so, but to be the channel of blessing and the sustainer of life to Israel and the whole earth. This is all typical of Christ; indeed, a type could hardly be more perfect. We see a man laid, to all intents and purposes, in the place of death, by the hand of man, and then raised up by the hand of God, and set in dignity and glory. ''Ye men of Israel, hear these words:

Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain; whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that He should be holden of it." (Acts ii. 22–24.)

But there are two points in Joseph's history which, together with what has been noticed, render the type remarkably perfect; I allude to his marriage with a stranger, in chapter xli, and his interview with his brethren, in chapter xlv. The following is the order of events:—Joseph presents himself to his brethren as one sent by the father; they reject him, and, so far as lies in them, put him in the place of death; God takes him up from thence, and raises him to a position of highest dignity: thus exalted, he gets a bride; and when his brethren according to the flesh are thoroughly broken and prostrate before him, he makes himself known to them, tranquilizes their hearts, and brings them into blessing; he then becomes the channel of blessing to them and to the whole world.

I shall just make a few remarks on Joseph's marriage and the restoration of his brethren. The strange wife shadows forth the Church. Christ presented Himself to the Jews, and being rejected, took His seat on high, and sent down the Holy Ghost to gather out an elect Church, composed of

Jew and Gentile, to be united with Him in heavenly glory. The doctrine of the Church has already been dwelt upon, in our remarks on chapter xxiv, but one or two points remain to be noticed here. And, first, we may observe, that Joseph's Egyptian bride was intimately associated with him in his glory.* She, as being part of himself, shared in all that was his. Moreover, she occupied a place of nearness and intimacy known only to herself. Thus it is with the Church, the bride of the Lamb. She is gathered to Christ to be the sharer, at once, of His rejection and His glory. It is Christ's position which gives character to the position of the Church, and her position should ever give character to her walk. If we are gathered to Christ, it is as exalted in glory, and not as humbled down here. "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more." (2 Cor. v. 16.) The Church's gathering-point is Christ in glory.—"I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me." (John xii. 32.)

There is far more of practical value in the clear apprehension of this principle than might, at first sight, appear. It is ever the aim of Satan, as it is the tendency of our hearts, to lead us to stop short of God's mark in everything, and especially in the centre of our unity as Christians. It is a popular

*Joseph's wife sets forth the Church as united to Christ in His glory: Moses' wife presents the Church as united to Christ in His rejection.

sentiment, that "the blood of the Lamb is the union of saints," *i. e.*, it is the blood which forms their centre of unity. Now, that it is the infinitely precious blood of Christ which sets us individually as worshipers in the presence of God, is blessedly true. The blood, therefore, forms the divine basis of our fellowship with God. But when we come to speak of the centre of our unity as a church, we must see that the Holy Ghost gathers us to the Person of a risen and glorified Christ; and this grand truth gives character—high and holy character—to our association as Christians. If we take lower ground than this, we must inevitably form a sect or an *ism*. If we gather round an ordinance however important, or round a truth however indisputable, we make something less than Christ our centre.

Hence, it is more important to ponder the practical consequences which flow out of the truth of our being gathered to a risen and glorified Head in the heavens. If Christ were on earth, we should be gathered to Him here; but inasmuch as He is hidden in the heavens, the Church takes her character from His position there. Hence, Christ could say, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world;" and again, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." (John xvii. 16, 19.) So also, in 1 Peter, we read, "To whom coming, as unto a living Stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious; ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spirit-

ual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (Chap. ii. 4, 5.) If we are gathered to Christ, we must be gathered to Him *as* He is and *where* He is; and the more the Spirit of God leads our souls into the understanding of this, the more clearly we shall see the character of walk that becomes us. Joseph's bride was united to him, not in the pit or the dungeon, but in the dignity and glory of his position in Egypt; and, in her case, we can have no difficulty in perceiving the vast difference between the two positions.

But further, we read, "And unto Joseph were born two sons, *before the years of famine came.*" There was a time of trouble coming; but previous thereto, the fruit of his union appeared. The children whom God had given him were called into existence previous to this time of trial. So will it be in reference to the Church. All the members thereof will be called out, the whole body will be completed and gathered to the Head in heaven, previous to "the great tribulation" which shall come upon all the earth.

We shall now turn, for a little, to Joseph's interview with his brethren, in which we shall find some points of resemblance to Israel's history in the latter day. During the period that Joseph was hidden from the view of his brethren, these latter were called to pass through deep and searching trial—through intensely painful exercises of conscience. One of these exercises is poured out in the following words: "And they said one to another,

'*We are verily guilty* concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and *we would not hear;* therefore *is this distress come upon us.*' And Reuben answered them, saying, 'Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also, *his blood is required.*'" (Chap. xlii. 21, 22.)

Again, in chapter xliv, we read, "And Judah said, 'What shall we say unto my lord? What shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants.'" None can teach like God. He alone can produce in the conscience the true sense of sin, and bring the soul down into the profound depths of its own condition in His presence. This is all His own work. Men run on in their career of guilt, heedless of everything, until the arrow of the Almighty pierces their conscience, and then they are led into those searchings of heart and intense exercises of soul which can only find relief in the rich resources of redeeming love. Joseph's brethren had no conception of all that was to flow to them from their actings toward him. "They took him and cast him into a pit . . . . . and they sat down to eat bread." "Woe to them . . . . that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph." (Amos vi. 6.)

However, God produced grief of heart, and exercises of conscience, and that in a most wonderful

way. Years rolled on, and these brethren might have vainly imagined that all was right; but, then, "seven years of plenty, and seven years of scarcity"! What did they mean? Who sent them? And for what were they designed? Admirable providence! Unsearchable wisdom! The famine reaches to Canaan, and the calls of hunger actually bring the guilty brethren to the feet of the injured Joseph! How marked is the display of God's own hand in all this! There they stand, with the arrow of conviction thrust through and through their consciences, in the presence of the man whom they had "with wicked hands," cast into the pit. Surely their sin had found them out; but it was in the presence of Joseph. Blessed place!

"Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, 'Cause every man to go out from me.' And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren." (Chap. xlv. 1.) No stranger was allowed to witness this sacred scene. What stranger could understand or appreciate it? We are here called to witness, as it were, divinely-wrought conviction in the presence of divine grace; and, we may say, when these two come together, there is an easy settlement of every question.

"And Joseph said unto his brethren, '*Come near to me*, I pray you.' And they came near. And he said, 'I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now, therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God

did send me before you, to preserve life. . . . And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you sent me hither, but God.'" This is grace indeed, setting the convicted conscience perfectly at rest. The brethren had already most thoroughly condemned themselves, and hence Joseph had only to pour in the blessed balm into their broken hearts. This is all sweetly typical of God's dealings with Israel in the latter day, when "they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn." Then they shall prove the reality of divine grace, and the cleansing efficacy of that "fountain which shall be opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." (Zech. xiii. 1.)

In the third chapter of Acts, we find the Spirit of God in Peter seeking to produce this divine conviction in the consciences of the Jews.—"The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses." These statements were designed to elicit from the hearts and lips of the hearers the confession made by Joseph's brethren—"We are verily guilty." Then follows the grace. "And now, brethren, I wot that through

ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled. Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." We here see, that although the Jews really carried out the enmity of their hearts in the death of Christ, as did also Joseph's brethren in their treatment of him, yet the grace of God to each is seen in this, that all is shown to be decreed and foreshown of God for their blessing. This is perfect grace, surpassing all human thought; and all that is needed, in order to the enjoyment thereof, is a conscience truly convicted by the truth of God. Those who could say, "We are verily guilty," could rightly understand the words of precious grace, "It was not you, but God." Thus it must ever be. The soul that has thoroughly pronounced its own condemnation, is prepared to understand and appreciate God's pardon.

The remaining chapters of this book are taken up with the removal of Jacob and his family into Egypt, and their settlement there; Joseph's actings during the remaining years of famine; Jacob's blessing the twelve patriarchs; his death and burial. We shall not dwell in detail upon these things, though the spiritual mind may find much to feed upon therein.*

*The close of Jacob's career stands in most pleasing contrast with all the previous scenes of his eventful history. It reminds one of a serene evening after a tempestuous day: the sun, which during the day had been hidden from view by clouds, mists and

Jacob's groundless fears dissipated by the sight of his son alive, and exalted,—the peculiar grace of

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fogs, sets in majesty and brightness, gilding with his beams the western sky, and holding out the cheering prospect of a bright to-morrow. Thus is it with our aged patriarch. The supplanting, the bargain-making, the cunning, the management, the shifting, the shuffling, the unbelieving selfish fears,—all those dark clouds of nature and of earth seem to have passed away, and he comes forth, in all the calm elevation of faith, to bestow blessings, and impart dignities, in that holy skillfulness which communion with God can alone impart.

Though nature's eyes are dim, faith's vision is sharp. He is not to be deceived as to the relative positions assigned to Ephraim and Manasseh in the counsels of God. He has not, like his father Isaac, in chapter xxvii, to "tremble very exceedingly" in view of an almost fatal mistake. Quite the reverse. His intelligent reply to his less-instructed son is, "I know it, my son, I know it." The power of sense has not, as in Isaac's case, dimmed his spiritual vision. He has been taught, in the school of experience, the importance of keeping close to the divine purpose, and nature's influence cannot move him from thence.

In chapter xlviii. 11, we have a very beautiful example of the mode in which our God ever rises above all our thoughts, and proves Himself better than all our fears. "And Israel said unto Joseph, 'I had not thought to see thy face; and, lo, God hath showed me also thy seed.'" To nature's view, Joseph was dead; whereas, in God's view, he was alive, and seated in the highest place of authority, next the throne. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." (1 Cor. ii. 9.) Would that our souls could rise higher in their apprehension of God and His ways.

It is interesting to notice the way in which the titles "Jacob" and "Israel" are introduced in the close of the book of Genesis; as, for example, "One told *Jacob*, and said, 'Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee'; and *Israel* strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed." Then, it is immediately added, "And *Jacob* said unto Joseph, 'God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz.'" Now, we know, there is nothing in Scripture without its specific meaning, and hence this interchange of names contains some instruction. In general, it may be remarked that "Jacob" sets forth the depth to which God had descended; "Israel," the height to which Jacob was raised.

God seen in its overruling power, yet evidently mingled with judgment, inasmuch as Jacob's sons have to go down into the very place whither they had sent their brother. Again, Joseph's remarkable grace throughout: though exalted by Pharaoh, he hides himself, as it were, and binds the people in abiding obligation to the king. Pharaoh says, "Go to Joseph," and Joseph, in effect, says, "All you have and all you are belong to Pharaoh." This is sweetly interesting, and leads the soul on to that glorious time when the Son of Man shall take the reins of government into His own hand, by divine appointment, and rule over the whole redeemed creation; His Church—the bride of the Lamb—occupying the nearest and most intimate place, according to the eternal counsels. The house of Israel, fully restored, shall be nourished and sustained by His gracious hand; and all the earth shall know the deep blessedness of being under His sceptre. Finally, having brought everything into subjection, He shall hand back the reins of government into the hands of God, that "He may be all in all." From all this we may form some idea of the richness and copiousness of Joseph's history. In short, it sets before us, distinctly, in type, the mission of the Son to the house of Israel, His humiliation and rejection, the deep exercises and final repentance and restoration of Israel, the union of the Church with Christ, His exaltation and universal government, and, finally, it points us forward to the time when "God shall be all in all." It is quite needless to

remark, that all these things are largely taught, and fully established, throughout the entire canon of inspiration; we do not, therefore, build their truth upon Joseph's history; still it is edifying to find such early foreshadowings of these precious truths; it proves to us the divine unity which pervades Holy Scripture. Whether we turn to Genesis or to Ephesians—to the prophets of the Old or those of the New Testament—we learn the same truths. "ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY INSPIRATION OF GOD."

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